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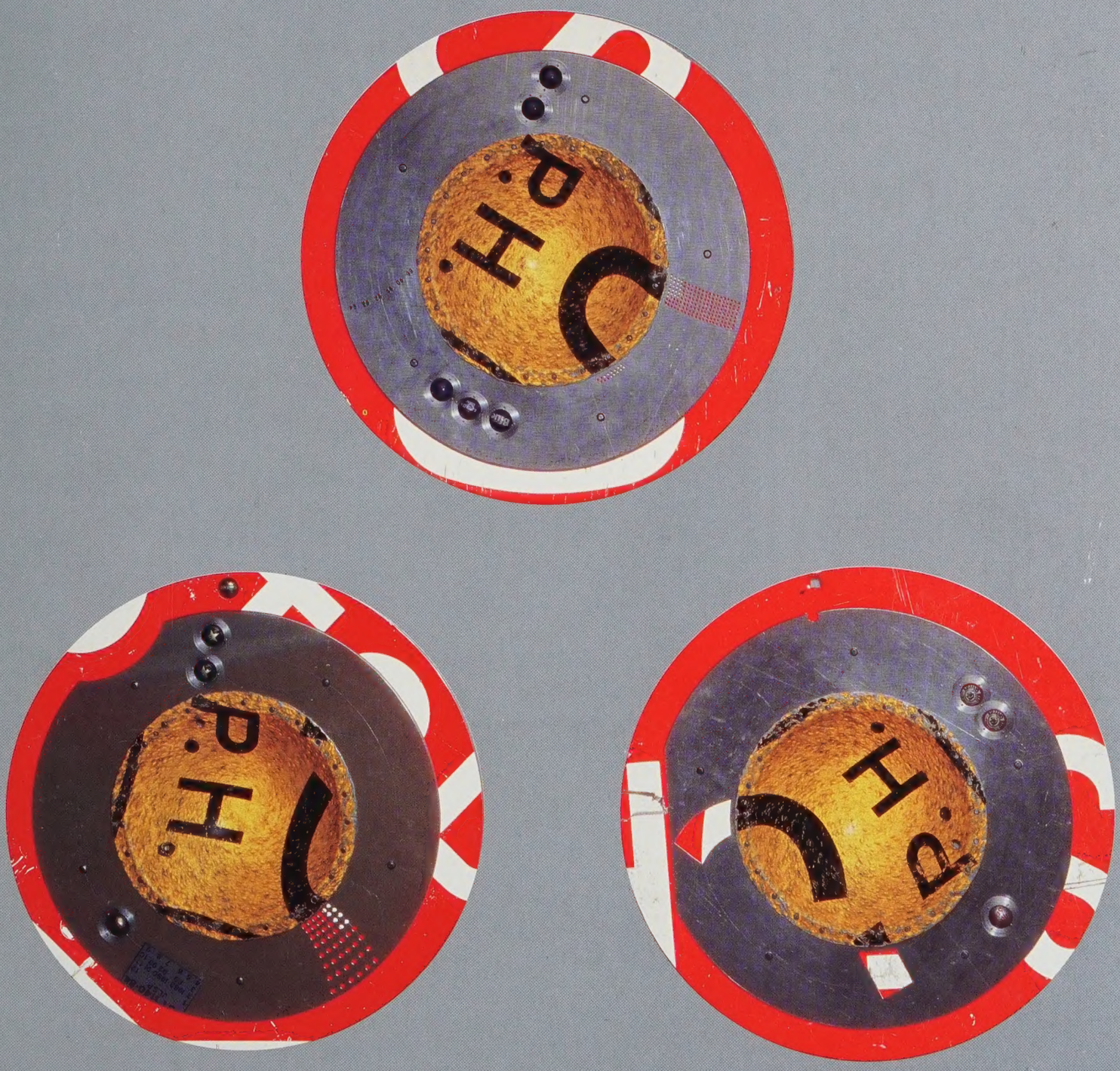

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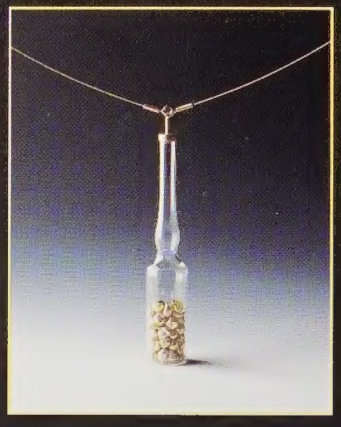

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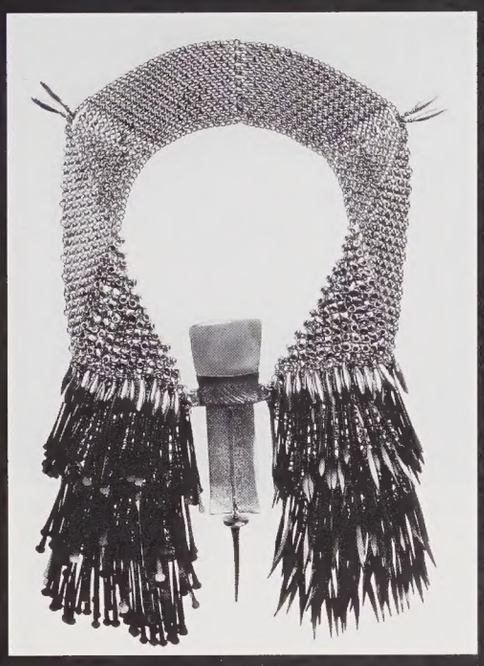

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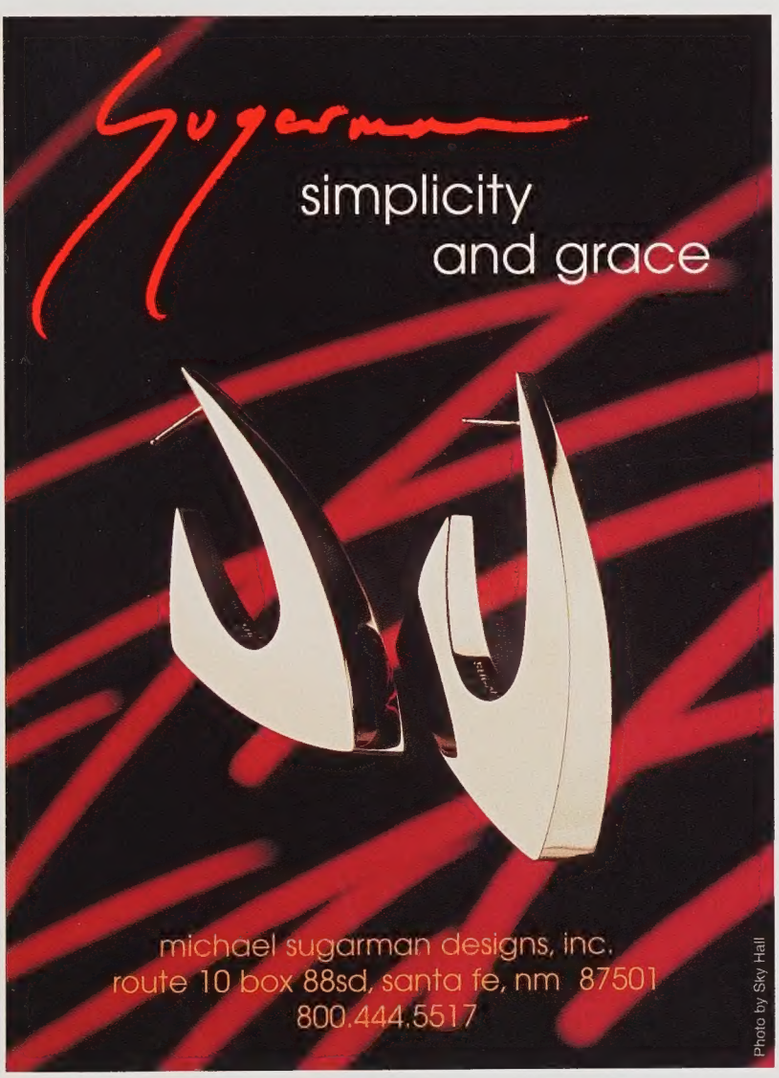

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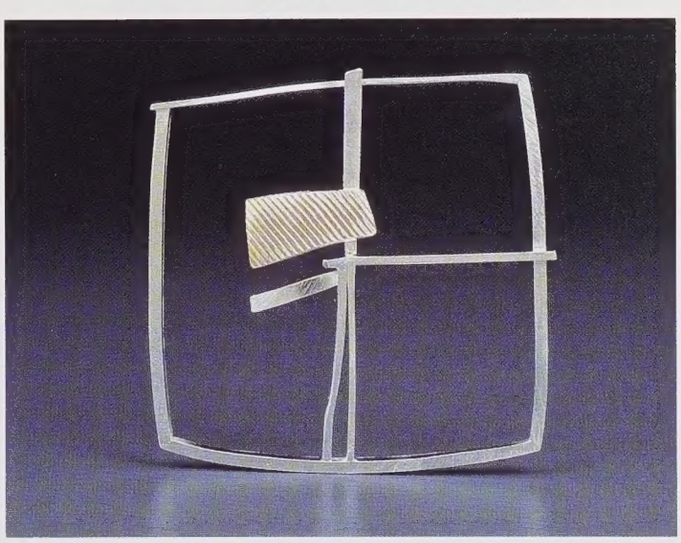

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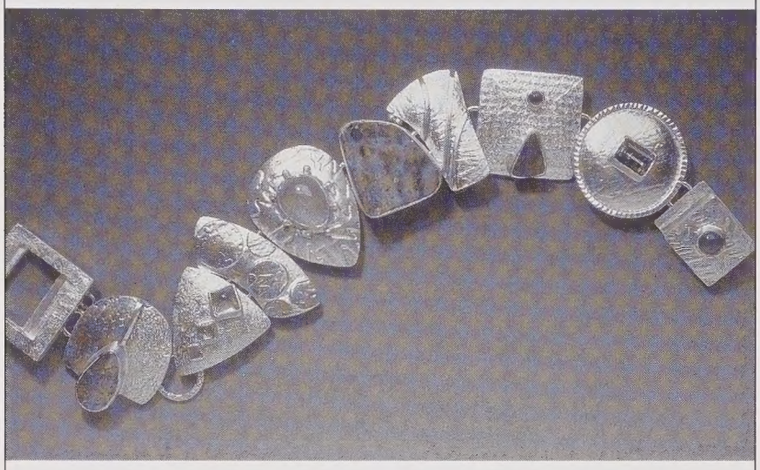

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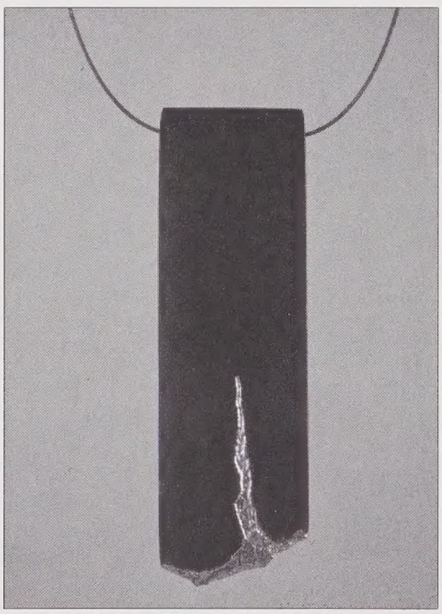

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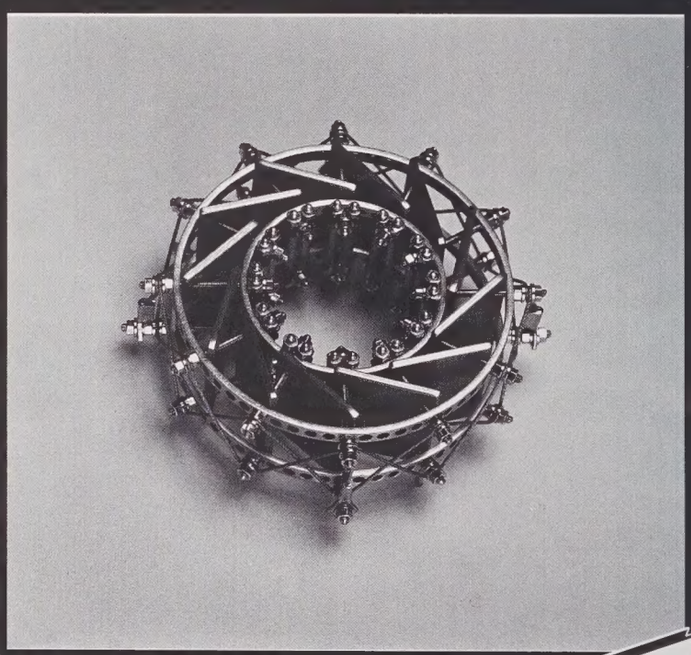

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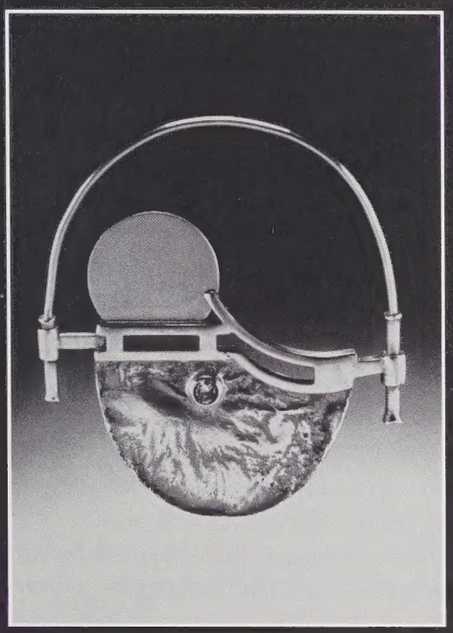

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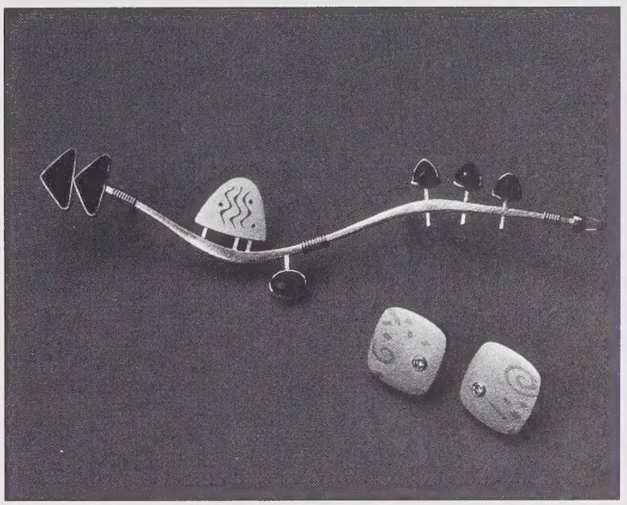

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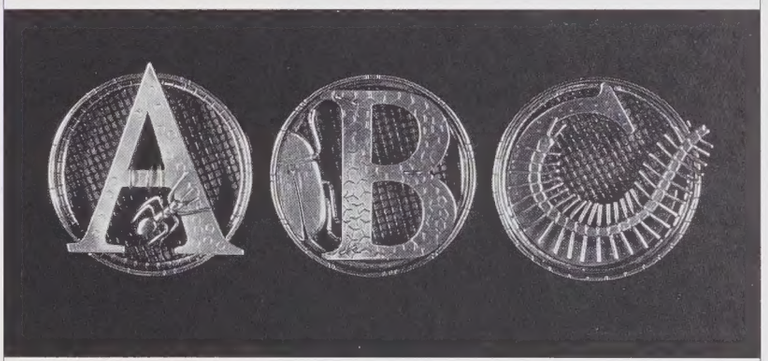

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Editorial

Recently I found myself in an animated and somewhat heated discussion with a metalsmith who teaches in a university metals program. The discussion started when I recounted how the US Postal Service had questioned this magazine's mailing status. It seems that someone in the government thought that *Metalsmith* was devoted primarily to sales (thus it should pay catalogue rates) because it featured exquisitely printed examples of jewelry within its pages.

The academic metalsmith was outraged and preceded to expound on the stupidity of that particular civil servant. I, on the other hand, while not agreeing with the Post Office's assessment defended the mistake. This created even more acrimony. The professor was shocked that as the editor of the magazine I could forgive what many consider to be a heinous and somehow distasteful association of *Metalsmith* to *commerce.* Trying to raise my voice just enough to be heard above these fulminations, but not enough to be considered shouting, I explained that for the vast majority of the public, jewelry, (ranging from the costume to the fine art type) was probably almost solely, or at least most frequently, encountered in retail stores and commercial catalogues. My antagonist heard just enough of this to accuse me of insulting the entire field of metalsmithing.

I intended no such insult, nor did I in any way suggest that *Metalsmith* magazine and the artists included herein were singularly preoccupied with consumer values. On the other hand I still remain shocked that this individual refused to even consider the reasons for the misinformed postal worker's opinion. Granted, this magazine probably appeals to specialists in the field and there may be a case to be made for simply ignoring the perceptions of the unenlightened masses. But to me this innocent mistake was one more clarion call for education and outreach. Furthermore, it concerns me that considering the power of the marketplace in all aspects of our lives, that even the most ivory-towered practitioners of the metal arts do not devote some of their attention and intelligence to try to define our historical and ongoing relationship to commerce rather than to simply withdraw from the issue.

I guess I have had enough Marxist theory during my schooling to find the forces of the marketplace (be they good or bad) to be pertinent to most forms of contemporary production, whether it be site-specific, temporary installations, art jewelry, or finely cut stones set in platinum. I also have had enough conversations with metalsmiths who depend on their success at craft shows to feel that there is a large portion of readers for whom the marketplace is a necessary, dare I say essential, arena of concern.

I think we all have a role to play in educating the postal workers of the world to be able to appreciate the different approaches to jewelry and metals. I think that this magazine should take an active role in discussing and mapping metalsmiths' relationships to all of the aspects of society that impact their work. Finally, I think that even the most theoretical and esoteric of metalsmiths should begin to see the marketplace not as some unspeakable evil to be avoided at all costs but as one of the many and inevitable forces which impact our production and our audience.

Editor's note: In the Fall 1995 issue of *Metalsmith* the cover image by Myra Mimlitsch Gray was incorrectly identified. The cover image should have been captioned *Object/Tray Relationship.* Additionally both the cover image and the images for the article on Myra should have been credited to photographer: John Lenz. We regret the omission of this information and offer our apologies to both artists.

F.C.L.

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Boris Bally
Litmus Bowls (group of three), 1994
re-used aluminum traffic
signs, rivets, found bottle caps,
3 x 21 x 21"
Collection: Jan Boyce, California
Photograph by Dean Powell
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Above
Ross Palmer Beecher
Stag, 1994/96
tin, wire, found material
Photograph by Mark Van S.
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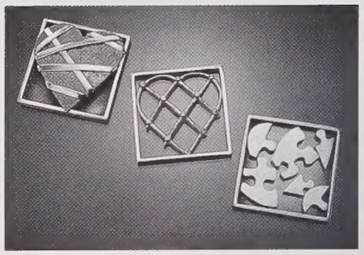

Pat Flynn
Heart Pins, 1995
18k, iron, diamond
1¼ x 1¼ x ⅛"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Bruce Metcalf

Heart & Art

At the 1994 SOFA crafts exposition in Chicago, I decided to buy a piece of jewelry as a present for my lover. I wanted something within my rather limited means, and something that would clearly express my affection. Since the jewelry would be a gift – as jewelry often is – almost any design would make the point. But I wanted something specific to the emotion being expressed. In the end, I chose one of Pat Flynn's heart pins, in silver and steel. My lover was pleased with this unexpected token. When she wears it, we are both reminded of our mutual love and our mutual commitment.

This scenario describes one of the central functions of jewelry in our culture: to symbolize the bond between two people. Flynn's heart pins are a contemporary version of sentimental jewelry, in which the object is designed to become a tangible expression of feeling. While such feelings might be projected onto any imaginable object – even a vacuum cleaner, I suppose – some objects do the job better then others. Since the heart is the standard symbol for affection in this culture, and since jewelry remains one of the most permanent and intimate of objects, it's no wonder that Flynn's heart pins have proven so popular over the years.

However, a party-pooper could ask: "Is it art?"

To start with, the art world justifiably regards the heart as a cliché. No special talent or intelligence is required to use the image of a heart: it's as common a received symbol as there is in this culture. Regardless of what the heart may mean to me or my lover on a personal level, artistically, something unusual is required to remove it from the level of the crashingly ordinary. Of course, Flynn tries to do just that, by varying the surfaces and colors and textures of his many heart designs. But the image of the heart remains indelible, regardless of all the dressing-up it might receive.

Even worse, the heart pin trades in sentiment. Among hard-nosed skeptics, art and sentimentality don't mix. James Joyce called sentiment "unearned emotion", implying that the feeling is prepackaged and reflexive. One could think of any number of examples, from sending Christmas cards to people you haven't thought about all year, to the automatic greetings we extend to others every day. (Do we really care how these people are doing?) In this century, sentiment has earned a bad name because feelings are so often exploited for commercial ends, and we can't always determine the difference between genuine feelings and their imitations. Small wonder that sentimentality is often regarded with intense suspicion. And as a result, the heart pin looks like bad art.

The art world conveniently ignores an important fact though. Much sentiment *is* earned, and earned at great cost. Making love endure is difficult. Becoming an adult is a tough project. Life is hard. Should we be blamed for wanting to celebrate our occasional victories? Jewelry has long been used as souvenier and *aide-memoir* for important personal events. But the art world is uncomfortable with these kinds of vivid personal meanings unless they are regarded at arm's length, preferably ironically. It's as if all this personal life is too hot, too wild, or too messy for art to contain.

There's a snide phrase that art teachers sometimes use: the "merely personal". The phrase suggests that a personal meaning is so specific that it has no implication beyond its owner's life. The fact that I'm in love with a certain person means nothing to you, and nobody would suggest that when I lie in my lover's arms, it's art. Furthermore, intensely personal meanings like love are fugitive. The meaning does not live in the object, but in an individual's mind. (A friend of mine once bought one of Flynn's heart pins for $15 at a flea market: evidently, a relationship that the pin once commemorated had collapsed, and the pin had been tossed out like an old pair of shoes. Losing its meaning, the heart pin lost its value.) In contrast, art commonly refers to a level beyond the individual, whether we call that level *universality, validity,* or *ambiguity.* Art is ambitious for big things. To do something like serving as a symbol for two people's private sentiments might seem *mere* in comparison.

Western art's mandate points toward the universal. But craft – at least the kind of craft that Pat Flynn practices, which is intended to fit into our daily lives – points toward the personal. Art rejects the "merely personal" as trivial; craft embraces sentiments as essential to a life well-lived. Typically, we assume that art's role is more important, and that interest in the personal is of a lower order. However, I find no persuasive proof that our personal lives are so trivial, and I reject any hierarchy that places art over craft. Instead, the question is about difference.

By way of analogy, consider motor vehicles. A sports car is intended for one kind of use; a dump truck for another. But simply because the sports car can top 140 mph, we don't decide that it's superior to the dump truck. We realize that two different functions have evolved two radically different forms, and a qualitative hierarchy does not apply. My conclusion about art and craft is similar: they are vehicles of substantially different kinds. In the end, I do not think Flynn's heart pin is art, but it is very good jewelry. As a vehicle for the expression of affection, it works just fine. What painting or installation could do the job so well?

It's as if craft functions halfway between the particularity of our bodies and the exaltedness of art. Flynn's heart pin symbolizes and condenses powerful emotions, but close to the site of those feelings. The pin lives on my lover's body. Art lives somewhere else, farther away.

Bruce Metcalf is an jeweler, artist, and writer from Philadelphia.

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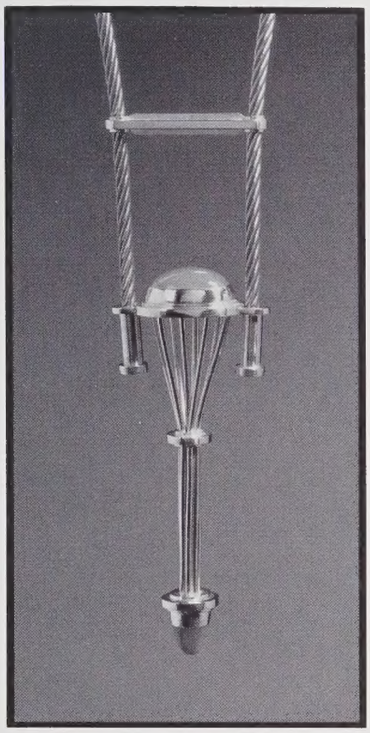

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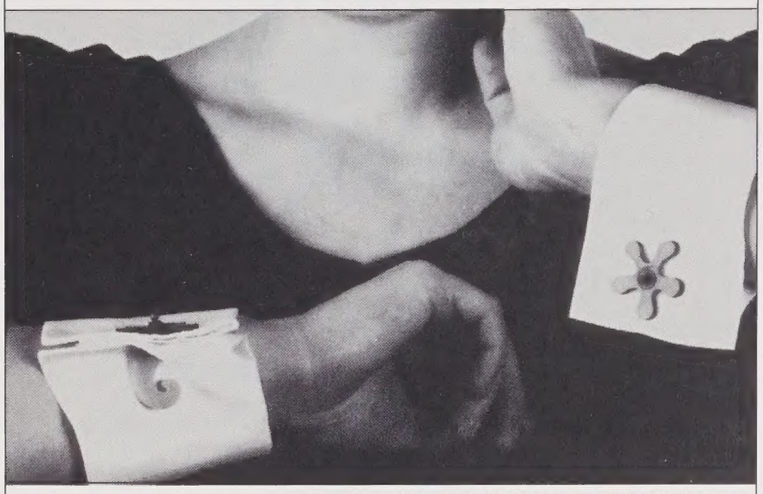

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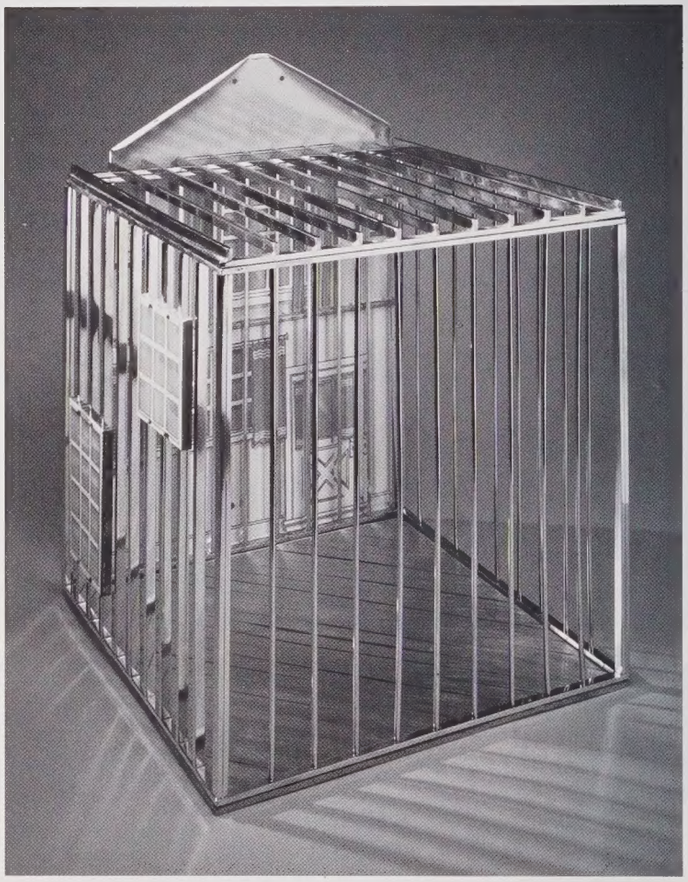
Harriete Estel Berman
Window of Isolation,
Cage of My Own Construction, 1990
brass, printed steel, 14 x 10½ x 10½"
Photo: Philip Cohen



Second Annual Jewelry/Metals Symposium Seattle, Washington

Sharon Boardway

Seattle was recently the host as well as the delighted recipient of the second annual Jewelry/Metals Symposium. Held at the University of Washington, it was sponsored by Facèré Jewelry Art Gallery, Pratt Fine Arts Center, the Seattle Metals Guild, and the University of Washington. This one day event burst its previous boundaries, both in the number of attendants and in the number of lectures and presentations.

Starting off the morning with a lively discussion of her work was Harriete Estel Berman, with her talk entitled, "Objects of Scrutiny; Cultural Meaning, Multiple Context". Immersed in society at large as well as the art world, her work is subject to the multiple contexts of her life as an artist, sculptor, metalsmith, feminist, teacher, housewife, and mother (not necessarily in that order). She stated, "All of my work comes from a decidedly feminist perspective... I use the word feminist with a decidedly feminine embrace. While many feminists have totally forsaken their domesticity, my artwork includes, observes, and analyzes the woman's sphere".

In 1980 she started a series entitled, *The Family of Appliances You Can Believe In.* In this, as well as in later work, the home serves as the vital context. It is not used as a singular image, but as a smoldering mix of emotions, expectations, and realities. In addition to the themes of *feminine feminism* and the home, Berman also works with the subject of autobiographical content. Being responsible for the home and care of two children has led her to a near obsession with the home as self identification. An example from this series is *Womanizer, Kitchen Queen,* 1982. It is a fabricated kitchen blender with a wind-up mechanism, and bears a gold crown reading "Mistress of the Home". From a later series is a piece entitled, *Window of Isolation, Cage of My Own Construction,* 1990, which further illustrates the themes of women's roles, the home, and autobiographical content.

She also works with the concepts of advertising and consumerism. Her slide show included a bittersweet sampling of real advertisements that instruct us in ways for better living. The appliance series often incorporated such ads either literally or within the cultural meaning of the words. This interest continues in her current series, begun in 1988, entitled *A Pedestal For a Woman To Stand On.*

This exciting collection of work synthesizes her separate loves for both fiber and metal. The pedestals are generally cube shaped, from 12 – 16" on each side, with attention paid to each side. Pattern has emerged as a dominant factor, referencing traditional quilt patterns. As seen before, titles are given emphasis and offer important insight into the work. In this series, the titles often reflect the name of the quilt pattern being used. An example of this is a pedestal entitled *Baby Block to Creativity,* 1990, which uses the quilt pattern "baby block". The prominent material used throughout the pedestal series is printed steel salvaged from metal doll houses.

Continued on page 14

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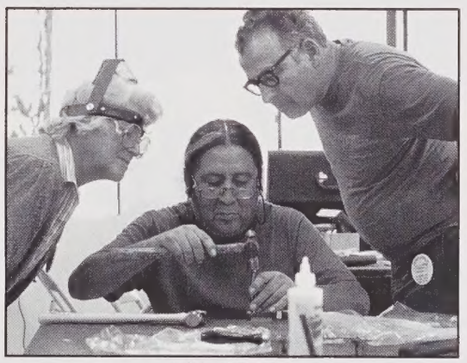

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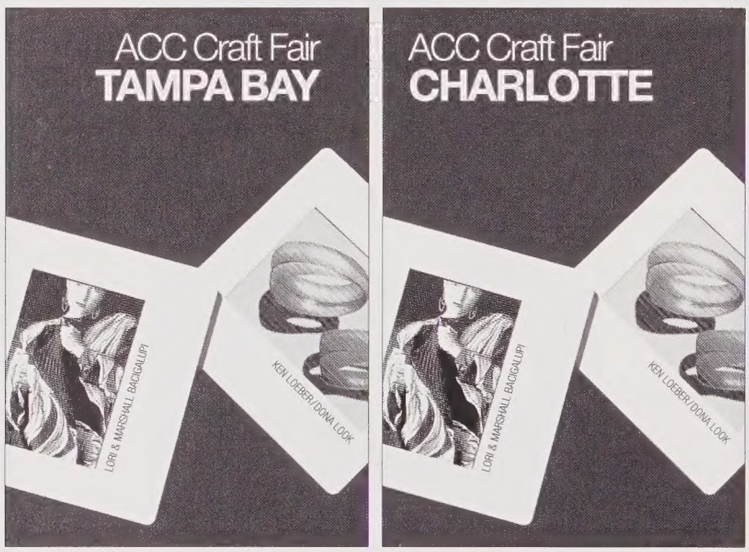

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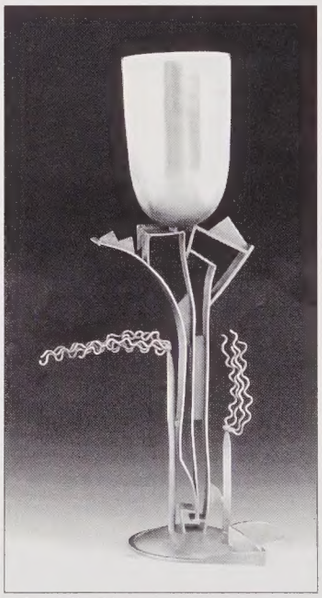

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Continued from page 10

Deconstructing these doll houses is also a way of "...deconstructing childhood fantasies and reconstructing, or rebuilding, a statement about adult realities", she explained.

For Berman, these sculptures are deeply-rooted in her personal life as a woman in today's society. She concluded that, "The second class status for women who take care of the home and children bears a strong relationship to the second class status of craft and the hand-made object in the art world."

The next speaker, Charon Kransen, took us from the world of the American woman to that of European jewelers. Kransen has become an established link between the United States and Europe. Before moving to the United States in 1989, he was president of the Dutch Jewelry Designers Organization, and for thirteen years was a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Utrecht. In addition to his profession as a distributor of European books, monograms, etceteras, he lectures and gives workshops around the country. He also represents about 160 contemporary European jewelers through his curated shows, both private and public.

For his talk entitled "Contemporary European Jewelry Design", Kransen chose to focus on the particular situation in Holland, as it is considered a front runner in the world of contemporary art jewelry. While it is a small country with few practitioners, he states: "The discussions that they hold among themselves and about their work are so lively that they can be heard all over Europe". And yet, Holland's place as a front runner is relatively new. Thirty years ago ostentatious jewelry was in bad taste, and the preference was for modest scale and sturdy forms.

In 1961, everything changed. Graham Hughes and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in England put together a spectacular jewelry exhibition entitled *International Exhibition of Modern Jewellry.* It was an international overview of jewelry from 1890 – 1961. Because of this exhibition and changes in the visual arts in the 1960's, young jewelry designers began to effectively challenge the expectations of their field. Artists like Gijs Bakker, Emmy van Leersum, and Lam de Wolf changed jewelry from being an affordable symbol of wealth to a forum for expressing new ideas. New techniques and the use of uncommon materials helped it move from a traditional craft to a visual language strongly connected to the human body. Freedom was the rallying cry and artists used that freedom to analyze, treat ironically, and reject traditional characteristics. Gold and other precious metals were absolutely *out*, as were standard findings and mechanisms. As Kransen stated: "material was not taken for granted. Material was not used as it was offered. What the artists would do is manipulate the material to such an extent that one would not even recognize it anymore. It was like the ultimate way to leave your personal signature". Artists were free to experiment with everything from scouring pads to light, and *jewels* no longer had to be modest in scale.

Kransen expressed his desire to show this innovative work in this country where, six years ago, it was largely unknown. In the past few years he has seen this change, and he believes that it will only progress further. He stated: "The discussion is not so much whether European jewelry is better, but what we can learn from different approaches in jewelry, from different parts of the world".

It was fascinating to move from these circumscribed events in Europe to the next topic of worldwide adornment augmentation. Through a very scholarly and logical approach, artist and University of Oregon professor Kate Wagle led us on an investigation into extended adornment aspects, both physical and intellectual.

Since adornment is related to and contextualized by culture, she distinguished three categorical descriptions of culture and their accordant types of adornment. These three broad descriptions are primary culture, marginal culture, and mainstream contemporary culture. Adornment within primary culture must satisfy social and ethnic demands. It can also be a set of behaviors and beliefs that are passed down through the generations. Marginal culture is that which develops in response to, and separate from, the values of the larger group. And mainstream contemporary culture is that larger group, familiar to most of us, with its own set of behaviors and beliefs.

Wagle showed numerous examples of primary cultural adornment, from headdresses to face paint, that all have certain elements in common. The materials and their use are determined by the physical environment as well as the level of skill in that culture. Form is heavily determined by the material's properties and the philosophies of that society. They are often ceremonial and transformational, as well as being related to social status and identification.

Wagle stated that artists can be seen as "appropriators, mediators, critics and interpreters". In general, artists have the ability to identify with and move between cultural influences. Operating in what we could term marginal culture, artists are investigating a wide array of materials and experience. The artist Fakir is an outstanding example of a person involved in a marginal culture while living in the mainstream. Seeking spiritual transcendence, he has been involved in outrageous body piercing including the use of weight bearing piercings. Another artist, Orlan also uses her own body, manipulated through numerous surgeries, as her medium. As the publication *Research* states: "In the past modern epoch, in which all of the art of the past has been assimilated, consumerized, advertised, and replicated, the last artistic territory resisting co-optation and co-modification by museum and gallery remains the body." The body is the specific territory of jewelers and Wagle concluded by suggesting: "Perhaps some of the artists here are in the act of defining our own cultural imperative... through a responsible recognition of the role of the artist as cultural mediator."

After a break for lunch, the symposium continued with an afternoon of local talent.

Phil Baldwin, an internationally renowned knifemaker led us on a *romp* through the history of bladesmithing. He explained that most knifemakers have no formal education, and thus rely heavily on the values of commercial society, and on historical forms. Contemporary knifemaking is a profoundly historically based craft. And in all these years, the general shapes of wedges and points haven't really changed all that much.

Continued on page 46

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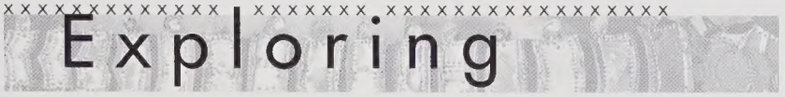
Ross Palmer Beecher

Exploring American Myths

Text: Matthew Kangas



Homage to Sylvia Plath, 1983
tin, wire, 19½ x 14½"
Courtesy of Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle
Photo: Rob Vinnedge

The Yankee qualities Ross Palmer Beecher mentions in discussing her art – thriftiness, tradition, waste not/want not – are almost as mythic as the stories, forms and genres she invokes. Whether emulating New England churchyard gravestones, quilts, flags, or various types of tramp art, Beecher draws upon a wide range of aspects of American culture to make her point: simple is beautiful, we can get by with less, the handmade is the key to salvation in an increasingly materialistic, throw-away society.

Born and bred in Greenwich, Connecticut, Beecher comes from the wrong side of the tracks. Instead of country club values, she was imbued with older Yankee myths: work hard, don't borrow, and I-can-do-it-for-myself. Blue-collar rather than Peter Pan-collar, the 42-year-old artist left Rhode Island School of Design after two years in 1978 and headed west.

Once in Seattle, she undertook a series of odd jobs – "deli work, parking cars, and working in a laundromat" – and quickly realized that, although she had left RISD and "a lot of sophisticated equipment"[1] her interest in making art was stronger than ever. Avidly riding her bicycle all over town, she frequently came across discarded materials like gas caps, bottle caps, auto tail light fragments, and empty soft drink cans.

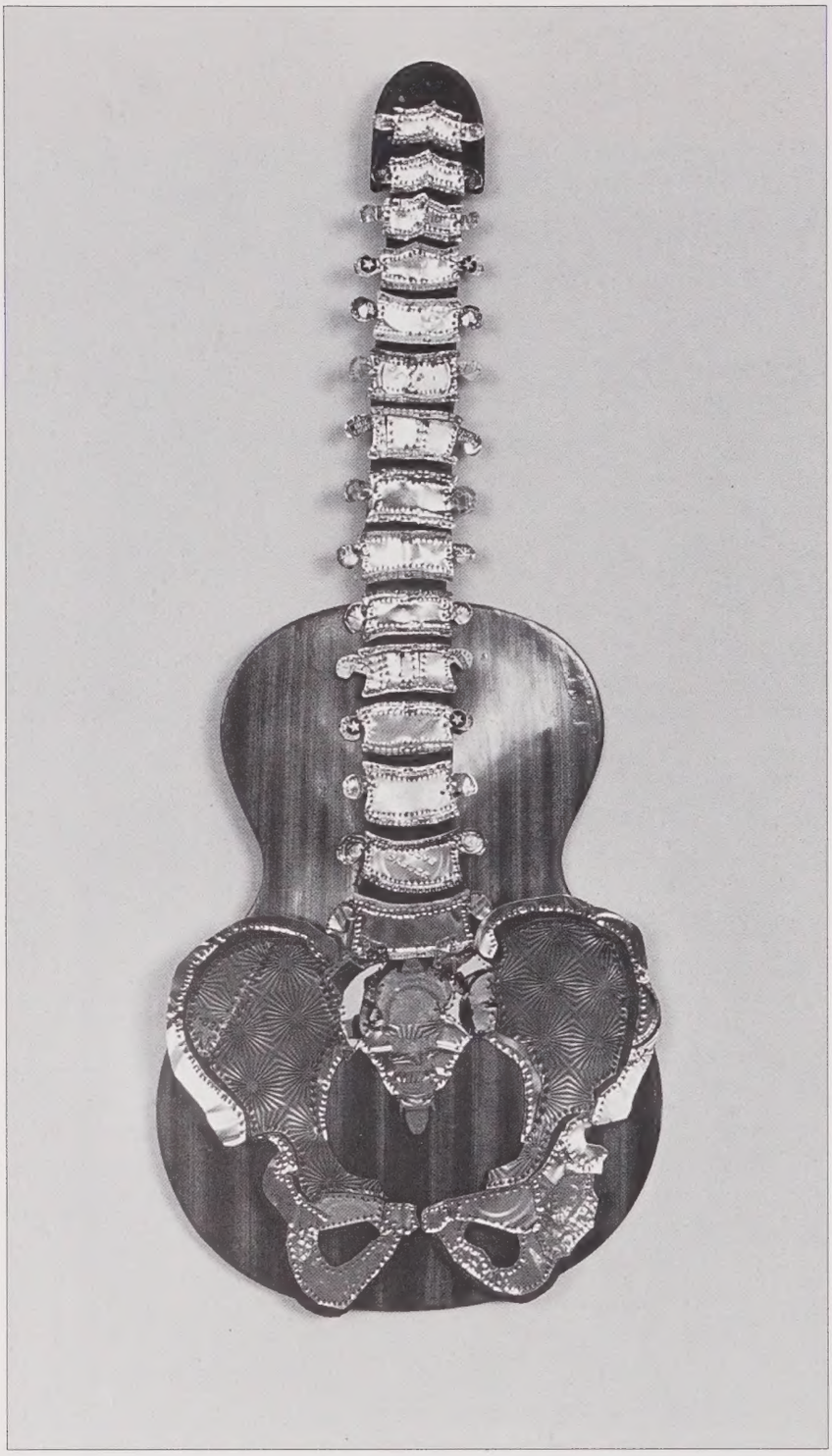
Partly out of an urgent need to continue making art even in the cramped living quarters she still favors, and partly out of a desire to recapture the spell of her New England roots, she began a series of metal-and-mixed-media wall sculptures which today (17 years later) have gained regional and national attention in galleries, museums, and private and public art collections.

Faux-folk art is a strong trend in the Pacific Northwest. For nearly 20 years, various practitioners besides Ross Palmer Beecher (Buster Simpson, Wally Warren, Alison Slow Loris, John Rice and others) have adapted their art school training to emulate the innocence and wisdom of untutored artists along with their fresh, non hierarchical attitude toward materials. This is the milieu and context of Beecher's art.

By 1986, she was being invited to participate in folk art-inspired exhibitions in Texas, Illinois, Louisiana, and California. Her early art does have a closer link to the work of unlettered artists but is still individually quirky enough (in technique and subject) to separate her out from true Outsider or folk art.

Green Heart, 1989-90
tin, wire, found material, 26 x 25"
Courtesy of Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle
Photo: Rob Vinnedge

Two Arms on Quilt, 1994
tin, wire, bottle caps, found material
Courtesy of Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle
Photo: Rob Vinnedge



Guitar (for Kurt Cobain), 1994
mixed media, 33 x 13"
Courtesy of Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle
Photo: Josh Harrison

Function is an oblique link between folk art and Beecher but none of her constructions are in any way usable. The quilts and flags operate as commemorative backgrounds for her over-the-top, obsessive material indulgences. Appropriately flat and two-dimensional, they proffer an image-ground that accumulates within each piece. As the social referents of the recycled materials are unraveled by the viewer, (Coke cans, chewing tobacco tins, BIC lighters, olive oil cans) the meaning of each piece emerges as a fusion of fragment, detail, and the whole.

Talking with Beecher reminds one of Emily Dickinson in logging boots ("I'm Nobody! Who are you?") but the poet Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), is probably a more apposite comparison. Beecher's 1983 *Homage to Sylvia Plath* uses only one material, perforated tin, and updates America's first real art form – carved stone headstones – to both pay tribute to and *claim* Plath's suicide as a warning and cautionary tale.

Using the same epitaph as Plath's real gravestone in England: "Even amidst fierce flames/The golden lotus can be planted", Beecher and Plath remind us that beautiful things can emerge out of turmoil. The aggressive punching of the metals is an expressionistic strategy that is obviated by the strict upright composition. Unusual among the artist's work because the text is so central, it marked a point where language became image. Words serve as fragments of ornament in later works, whether product logos or ad slogans, downplayed in favor of the more obvious workmanship and visually complicated, not to say cluttered, compositions.

Homage to Sylvia Plath was also inspired by examples of Mexican folk art Beecher saw in Seattle's many import shops. Rigged so that a candle may be inserted to illuminate the punctured letters, this work has distant links to Mexican Day of the Dead paraphernalia.

More Unitarian than Puritan, Beecher moralizes in ways that most New Englanders would recognize as an inescapable part of the Yankee conscience. Secular and humorous instead of religious and castigating, however, Beecher's works embrace myth only to deflate it or point out how fictional our memories of American heroes and heroines can be. Subsequent works dealt with Halloween, Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow legends, Richard Nixon, Mickey Mouse, Willy Loman, T. S. Eliot, the Pilgrims, Abraham Lincoln, and Uncle Sam.

Gradually, in works like *Green Heart,* 1989-90 and *Rib Cage,* 1995, Beecher began to address the human body. This interest in anatomy and mortality grew out of a part-time job as art therapist at an AIDS hospice, Bailey-Boushay House. The elements of *Green Heart* (leaves, beer cans, green grapefruit soda cans) may read symbolically as a narrative about love. Autumnal imagery suggests the ending of an affair. The valentine shape of the heart moves it away from a medically correct heart. The green cans may stand in for "green-eyed jealousy".

The exposed rib cage in *Green Heart* with its see-through center breaks any pictorial illusion and prepared the way for *Rib Cage,* 1995 which may be about smoking and health. Disposable cigarette lighters are within the lungs behind the ribs made of metal and cut-up vegetable steamers. Far from polemic or partisan, Beecher presents the breathing organs as cluttered, crowded, and possibly impaired. The flattened film cans surrounding the ribs may also allude to Hollywood's glamorization of smoking.

The artist's affinity to metal has only increased with the years. Its pliable hardness, especially tin, appeals to her as well as the "sensual feeling of pounding its hardness into delicacy. It's something very strong that you can control".[2]

Two Arms on a Quilt, 1994 is a transitional piece between the quilt format and the anatomical fragments Beecher concentrated on in her 1995 Greg Kucera Gallery exhibition. With bottle caps as the wide border, Beecher summons up the skeletal arms and hands of dead quilt makers in another memorial tribute. A small stone is inserted into the center of each of the 56 smaller squares at the center. These might symbolize the quilt makers' *stone* foundation as a part of American folk art heritage.

Beecher has straddled a delicate line between references to cultural heritages and current events. *Guitar (for Kurt),* 1994 is one of a number of works by Seattle artists created in response to the tragic suicide of Nirvana rock group singer and guitarist Kurt Cobain. Coming a decade after *Homage to Sylvia Plath,* this work is more sculpturally adventurous, incorporating a real guitar which has been over layered with a skeletal metal spine and pelvis.

On a more global level, Beecher's response to the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War, *Red Flag,* 1990 is a wry commentary on the merging of Communism and capitalism through a shared need for consumerism. The elaborately woven, cut-up Coca Cola cans form a beautifully rippling American flag that is faintly covered in one corner by a yellow hammer and sickle made of carpenter's tape measures. The white stars of Old Glory are abruptly stapled around it. One of the artist's most compelling works, *Red Flag* epitomizes Beecher's dry humor and is also a tribute to a distant possible ancestor, Betsy Ross, the Boston seamstress who purportedly made the first American flag.

On a more materially complex note, *Stag,* 1994/96 combines recycled metals on a carved and painted wooden background. This time, the accompanying plastic cigarette lighters are decorated with animals who have become product logos: Joe Camel, rabbits, bald eagles, etceteras. With no let-up in sight, Beecher is reminding us how, ever since Disney's *Bambi* and *Dumbo,* Mother Nature can be sacrificed to pushing a product.

The male deer is an assaulted trophy head by now, literally composed of dumpster garbage elements like coffee cans, rolling tobacco can labels, hubcaps, cigar tins, and even painted-tip cigarette butts. Disgust and pity come to the fore in this, one of Beecher's toughest pieces. More enraged than grieving, the tone of *Stag* may foretell an emerging *engagé* quality in the Seattle artist's work.

As in much of the best contemporary art today that favors the handmade, material is the vehicle for meaning in Ross Palmer Beecher. As her skills at cutting, weaving, bending, punching, and stapling together pieces of metal grows, her power over conveying meaning on complex and varied levels has increased. Allowing the found materials to speak of their humble origins does link her to folk art, to be sure; but her sense of color, design, and stringent moral satire place her in a current vein, on a plane of art that criticizes American culture and myths while reverently mimicking and altering prior craft traditions.

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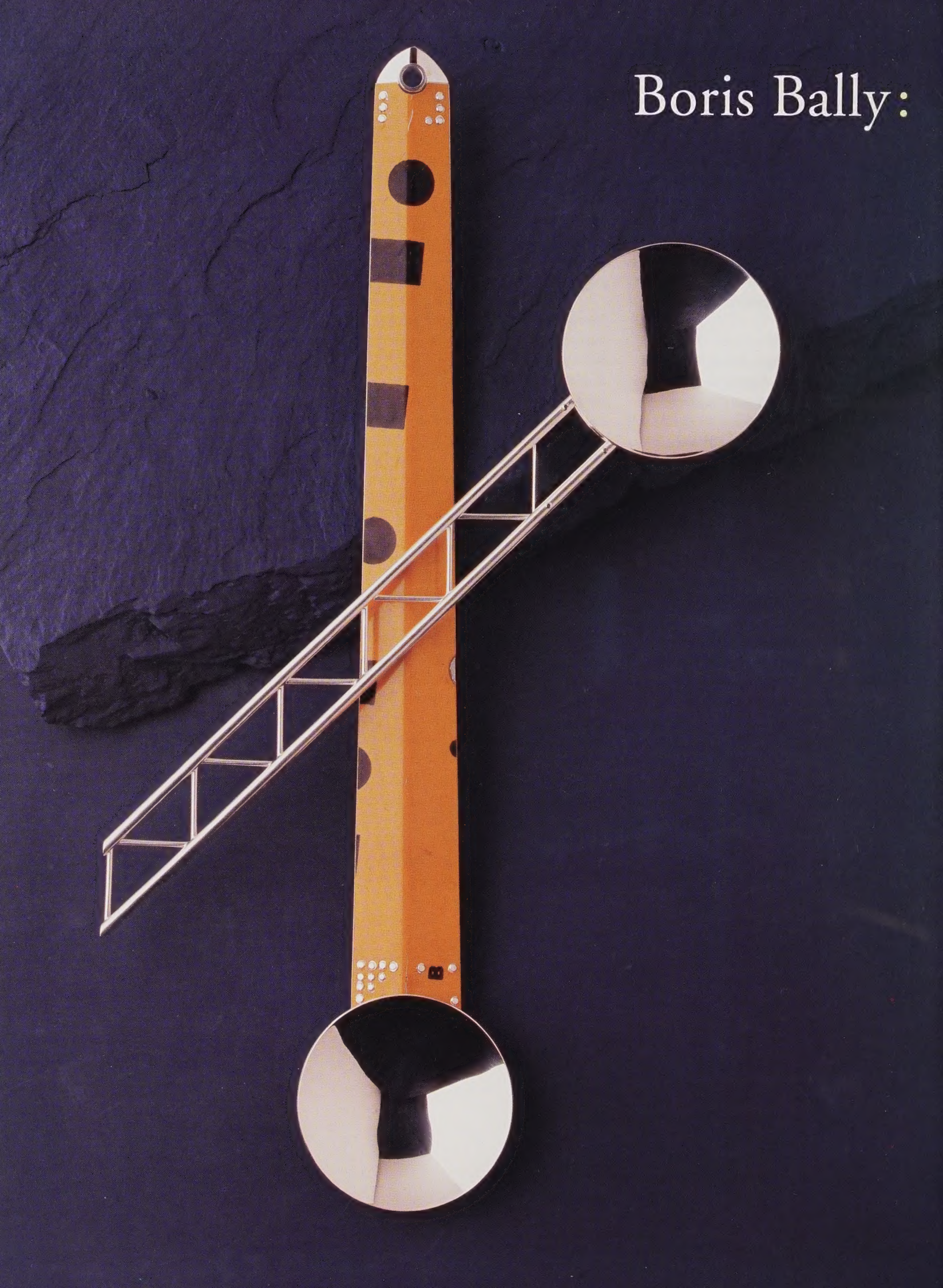
Matthew Kangas, art critic and independent curator, is the author of numerous catalogs and essays, including Breaking Barriers: Recent American Craft, *1995.*

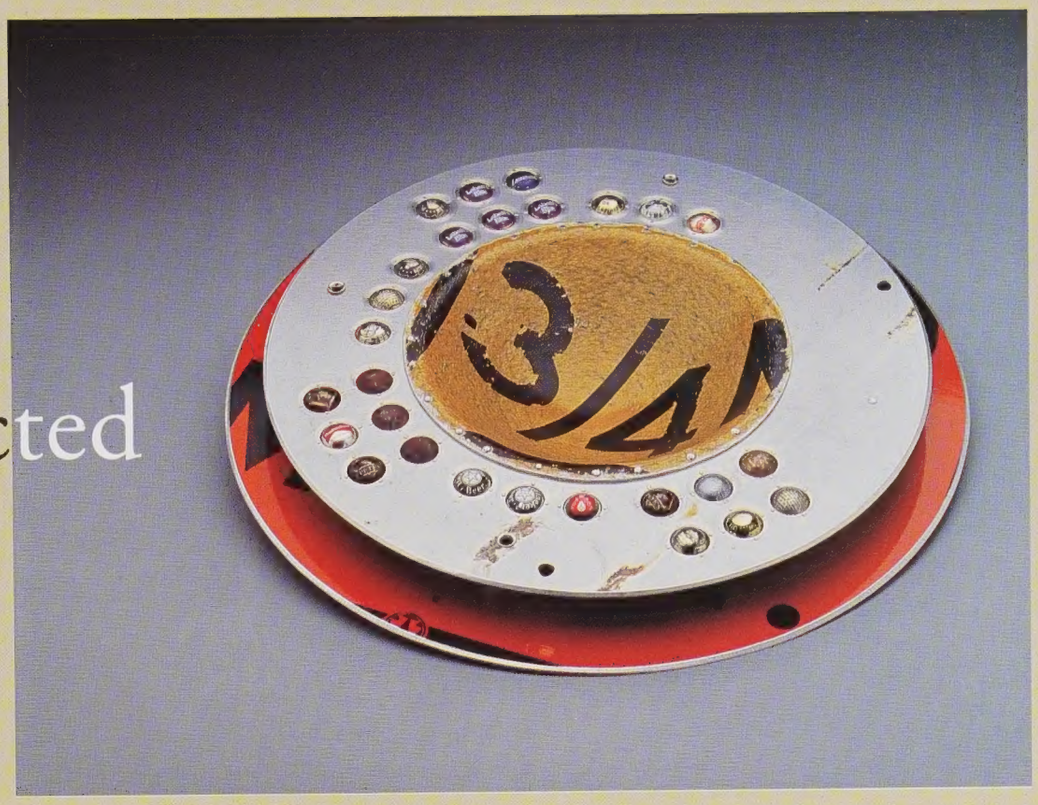
[1] Artist's Statement, 1995.

[2] Interview with the author, December 8, 1995.

Boris Bally:



Expecting the Unexpected



TEXT: BRUCE PEPICH

As this century draws to a close, the position of craft within the fine arts continues to shift and change. The tradition of singular handmade objects has been challenged by the creation of multiples. Handwork techniques employed by solitary artists have been influenced and replaced by industrial methods adapted for use on a smaller scale. An array of materials, including plastic and titanium, never before considered for use in craft has been employed by late-20th Century artists, and these elements are now accepted as media for finely hand-crafted objects. Artists create forms and designs which pointedly ask viewers to blur the distinctions between the functional, sculptural, and decorative. While these trends and developments are debated in the press and at symposia, the most important part of this dialogue is taking place in studios across the country where crafts artists are producing their work.

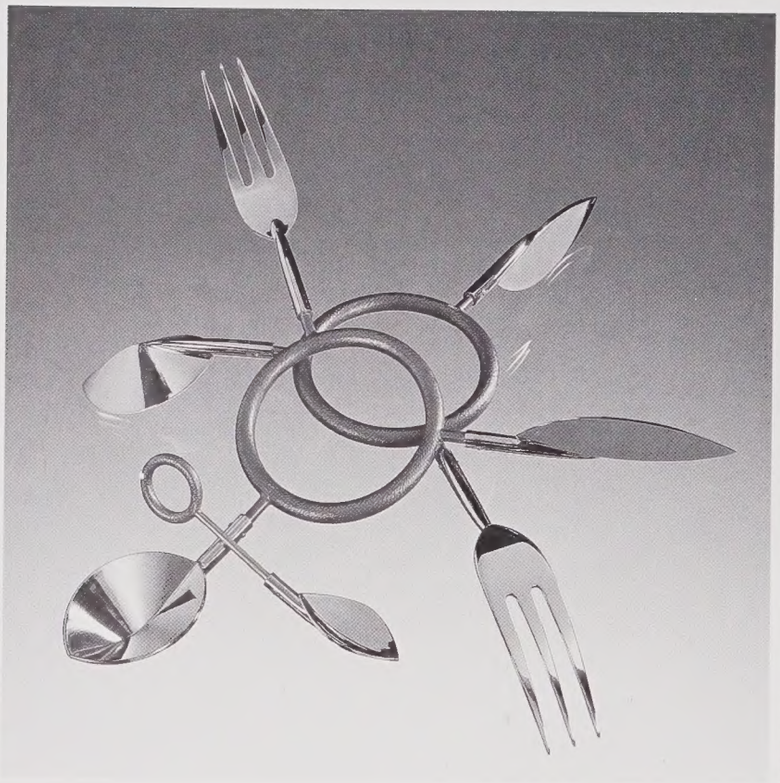
The career of Boris Bally is an example of this development within the craft field during the 1980s and 1990s. Since receiving his BFA at Carnegie Mellon University in 1984, he has managed to create a growing national reputation for an inventive body of jewelry and hollowware. With these works he actively engages the viewer in his inventive interpretations and re-interpretations of the possibilities inherent in metals techniques for the creation of personal adornment and functional objects. Combining a range of influences, from industrial machinery to architectural sites, in his explorations, Bally fabricates works which advance broader criteria for design and materials within the metals field.

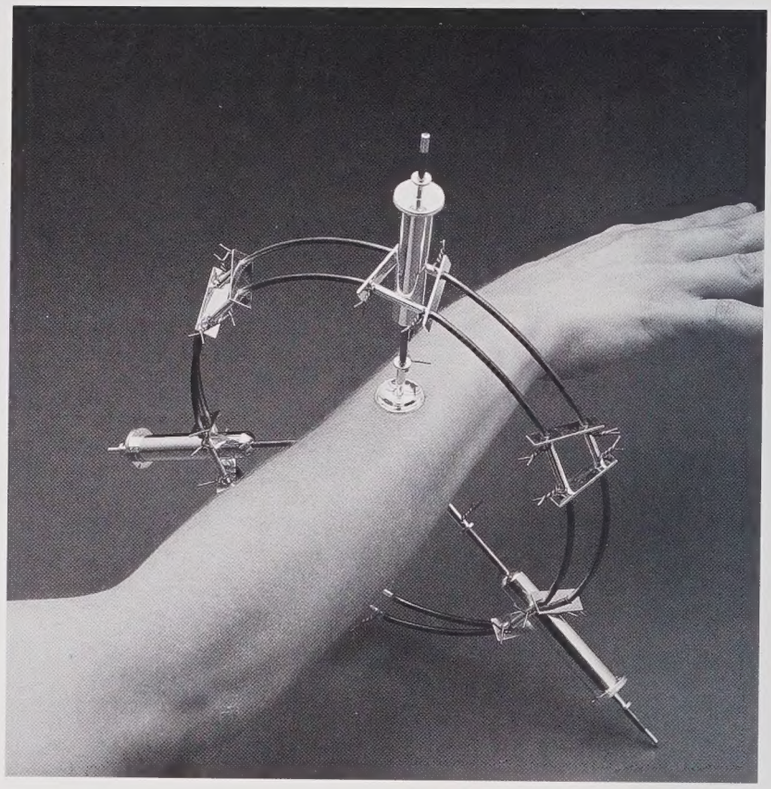
Bally has altered the function of jewelry, using it as a springboard for pieces that simultaneously conform to and act in opposition to the body they have traditionally been meant to adorn. With *Constrictor,* 1990, Bally creates an intriguing mix of adornment and confinement. A sterling, brass, and titanium band punctuated with rubies encircles the forearm. Instead of a conventional closure, the artist devised a system of plunger-like screws that effectively *bolt* the band to the body. These attachments are both closures and major decorative elements. The appearance of this piece suggests a wide range of references, from Rube Goldberg's elaborate contraptions, to medical harnesses or halo braces, to a measuring apparatus borrowed from a mad scientist's lab. In making his objects, Bally does not neglect a witty look at the world around him. There are references to comic books and computer games as well as visual puns on architecture and functional and wearable objects. This wit allows him to ask serious questions about the nature of adornment and its possibilities.

ABOVE
75% Bowl, 1993
re-used traffic signs, bottle caps, silver rivets, aluminum tube/wire
20 dia x 2¾"

LEFT
Penn DOT Serving Spoon, 1993
Trussware Serving Spoon, 1993
silver, re-used aluminum traffic sign
15 x 2¾ x ⅝", 12 x 2¾ x ¾"

Photos: Dean Powell





ABOVE
EAT WEAR wearable flatware, 1992
goldplated brass, cast silver, riveted
10½ x 11 x 1½"

ABOVE RIGHT
Constrictor Armform, 1990
silver, oxidized brass, rubies, titanium
10½ x 11 x 1½"

Photos: Dean Powell

Constrictor is connected to traditions of fine jewelry by its quality of craftsmanship and its luxurious materials. The title suggests the restrictions implicit in wearing the object as well as the restrictions associated with certain, more sinister, items related to body decoration. *Constrictor* makes its presence known to the wearer by its size (eleven inches in diameter) and the immobility that results from wearing it. This immobility recalls metal objects worn for reasons other than adornment from manacles to handcuffs. It also comments upon society's willingness to endure discomfort for the sake of *beauty.*

The piece mounts onto the arm with a series of screws which, on a visual level, are reminiscent of children's tinker toys and precision instruments. This provides a lighthearted counterpoint to the restriction in the piece and additionally questions the role of jewelry as a display of wealth and status. In the case of *Constrictor,* the wearer becomes subservient to the object. Adornment's role as a display of wealth and taste becomes a device suggesting issues not normally discussed by jewelry makers and collectors. If jewelry ordinarily communicates messages about social status, Bally subverts this message by creating adornment that requires a specific commitment to be worn.

Regarding a similar work from this series, *Caress,* Bally states: *"Caress* becomes an ominous presence. Its function is to measure and to confine the wearer's wrist with the pressure produced by the spring-loaded pistons. The wearer is forced to become part of this performance."[1] Wearing *Caress,* as with other Bally jewelry, the owner finds that the piece demands a specific level of conscious involvement.

EAT WEAR and *DIG WEAR,* 1992, exemplify Bally's continued explorations into the role of jewelry. These gold plated silver bracelets are bands from which radiate eating utensils such as forks, spoons, and knives on the former and garden tools including trowel, rake, and hoe on the latter. In these pieces the utensil becomes a decorative element similar to charms on a bracelet. Bally's blending of exquisitely rendered handmade jewelry with the pedestrian functions of growing and consuming food provide these pieces with an edge of satire and amusement. They also recall that for many cultures in earlier times, jewelry performed specific functions, including serving as easily transportable wealth, as objects of trade and barter, and as legal tender. Historically, individuals were also responsible for providing their own silverware when traveling. Jewelry's function in contemporary Western society may no longer be as utilitarian, but Bally creates an opportunity to examine its role by implying a tongue-in-cheek function in these works.

Cables, trusses, and other architectural elements appear regularly in Bally's jewelry, underscoring the artist's interest in the application of large-scale construction techniques to the creation of small-scale works. His metalwork exhibits an elegance based more upon technical ability than on the fineness of the materials used. This industrial/architectural sensibility finds its most succinct and intense statements in Bally's hollowware. This interest in industrial design is not surprising when one considers that Bally's family includes architects and designers.

Tripod Vessel and *Suspended Vessel Set,* 1988, combine oxidized brass and gold plated silver with concrete to create restrained works that address the historic role of the container form while presenting its possibilities for the future. In both cases, the containers are themselves contained, held and suspended in space by a trio of vertical poles, as if poised above ground to stay dry or to be held above a heat source. Their structure suggests the beakers and boilers of scientific laboratories and the storage hoppers of factories and farms, while also recalling the food storage and cooking containers of ancient peoples.

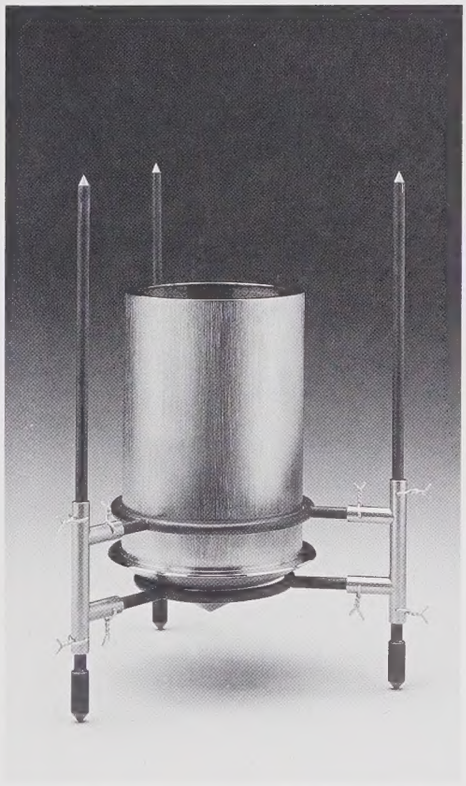
Both display the evidence of their construction. Miniature rivets, which bind the sections of these containers, are not hidden or covered, but are used as decorative patterning. Twisted silver wire links elements of the vessels. This visible means of support, reminiscent of sutures or chain link fencing, serves as a reminder of the hand of the artist, as when painters allow pencil marks to show through the surface of a painting or watercolor. The twisted wire is also evidence of process. It refers to metal construction techniques in which steel binding wire is used by metals artists to hold two pieces for soldering. The bowls of these containers seem to float in space between the tripod arrangement of poles, but the use of the twisted silver wire tethers and ties these forms to reality. The concrete in the bases creates a counterbalancing weight for the vessels as well as a textural counterpoint to the more precious materials used in the body of the vessel.

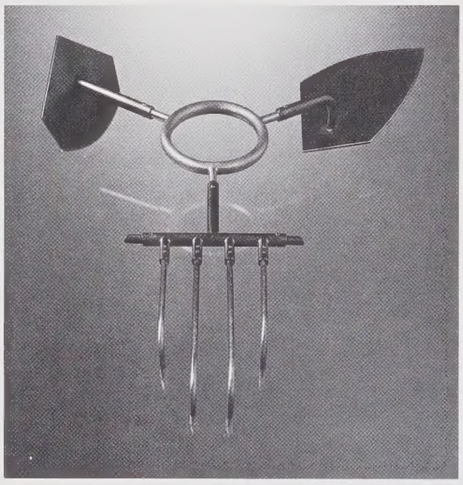
There is an intense urban sensibility in his work. Bally echoes the concrete and metal architecture of the city. He contrasts the dark of urban night (oxidized metals) with the flash of electric light (polished silver surfaces). This contrast is often repeated in his combinations of oxidized and polished surfaces and his use of gold plated silver combined with rubber and concrete. *Pepper Cone* and *Sodium Urn,* 1992, have conical shapes which are reminiscent of household salt and pepper shakers but which also suggest the tops of water towers on urban high rise buildings. There is something futuristic in these gleaming, streamlined works, a space-age quality suggesting Sputnik and UFOs, but in this case the takeoffs and landings are restricted to the dinner table.

Bally has hand-crafted flatware multiples since 1988. *Tablewear,* 1988, pairs ebony with silver for an angular approach to eating utensils. Long, black, rectangular, wooden handles meet diagonally with the bowl of a spoon, the tines of a fork and the shaft of a knife. This angular meeting of metal and wood is continued with a squared-off fork and a knife whose diagonally-shaped blade is the mirror image of the slanted ferrule.

When asked about the creation of multiple functional objects Bally states: "From the perspective of a fine jeweler, my goal has been to merge the disciplines of craft and design in my tabletop objects ... successful work must retain a quiet humor as well as flawless details... My designs are experimental and flirt with the contemporary issue of studio production. Some pieces are designed to become multiples yet never grow past the prototype stage. Other pieces are intended as original art pieces but become accepted as production pieces. One design may become a *hit* song which must be sung over and over; another may become a private poem never to leave the studio".[2]

While the simplicity of the functioning portions of his silverware illustrates an awareness of classic 20th Century design, Bally's handles provide these pieces with a feeling specific to contemporary America. *X-Panded Flatwear,* 1994, has the motif of an *x* created out of pierced and stretched sterling making up the entire handle of each piece. This repeating pattern suggests the crisscrossing of girders on the exterior of large buildings and their repeated pierced openings present an image of refined strength combined with light vulnerability. The service actually derives from the pattern of expanded metal, a split and pulled sheet metal used by industry to conserve manufacturing materials.





TOP
Suspended Vessel: Large, 1988
oxidized brass,
goldplate, silver, concrete
11 x 8 x 8"

ABOVE
DIG WEAR wearable garden tools, 1992
goldplated and oxidized brass, silver
14 x 16½ x 3"

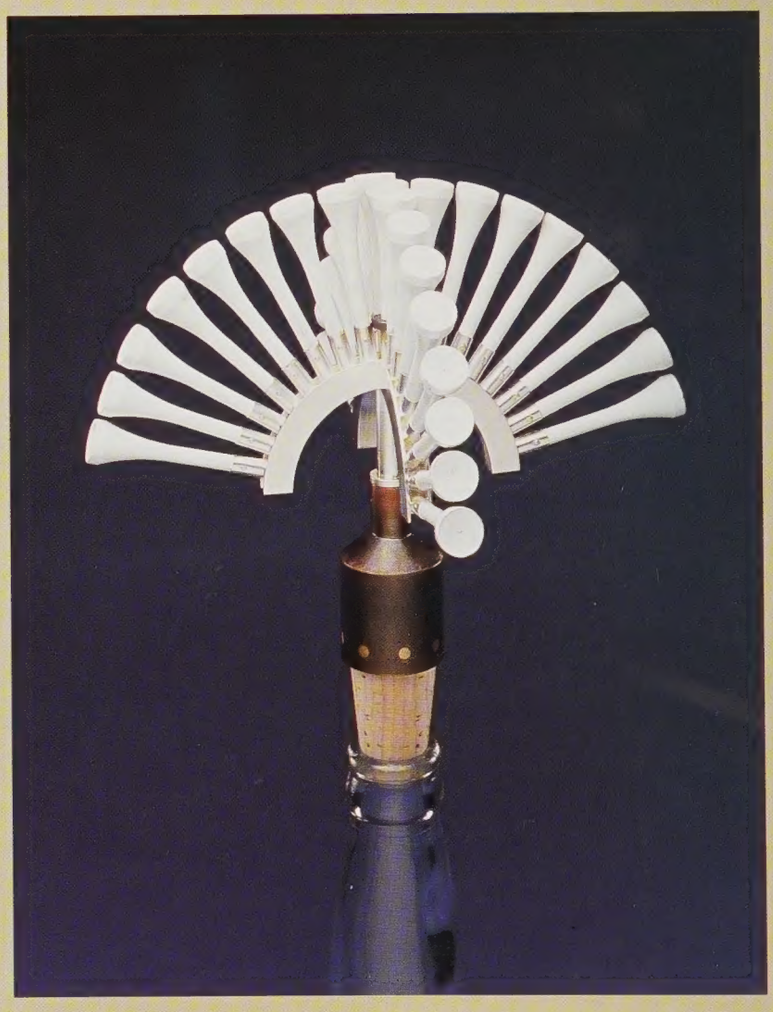
Photos: Dean Powell

FAR LEFT
X-panded Flatware (5 piece set),
X-panded Serving Spoon, 1994
silver, goldplated
knife: 8" tall, spoon: 1⅞" dia.
serving spoon: 8⅞ x 2 3/16 x 2"

LEFT
Vessel With A Silver Heart, 1993
silver, re-used aluminum
street signs
16" dia. x 8½"

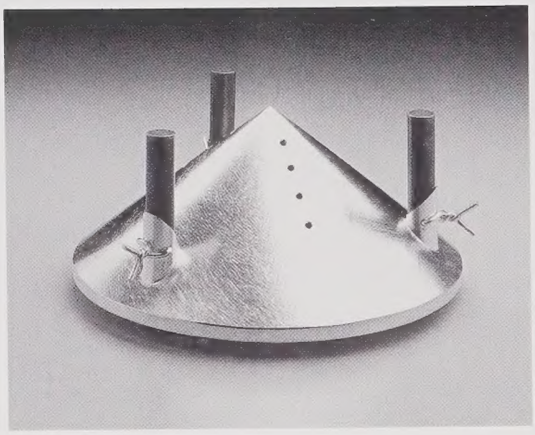
Photos: Dean Powell

Calthrop bottlecork, 1992
oxidized brass, silver
5⅜ x 4½ x 4¾"



T-Fan Stopper bottlecork, 1992
silver, golf tees, oxidized brass, cork
6¾ x 6½ x 6½"

Trirod Vessel, 1988
oxidized brass, goldplate, silver, concrete-filled
10 x 7 x 7"



ABOVE
Pepper Cone pep shaking object, 1992
oxidized brass, silver
2½ x 5 x 5"

ABOVE RIGHT
Nest-Vessels, 1993
lathe cuttings from *35 Layer Bowl*
(re-used street signs)
6" dia. x 5" each

In *Trussware,* 1993, Bally incorporates open girder beam designs as the handles of this fabricated, pressed, and riveted sterling flatware. The image of crossed steel girders with their sense of the impersonal city form an intriguing contrast to the intimate activity of eating with these utensils.[3] Bally has said, "The *Trussware* flatware set extracts elements from Pittsburgh's rust-industrial scenery ... it was inspired by the ceiling beams of a local gas-supply company."[4] By taking designs from bridges, overpasses, and structural steel, reducing them in size, and executing them flawlessly, Bally turns urban images into sources for designs that remind the viewer of the beauty and visual power in the constructed urban environment.

A part of Bally's Swiss family heritage, involves presenting family members with ceremonial corks to seal wine bottles between use and this activity served as the impetus for the creation of an ongoing series of sculptural/ceremonial bottle stoppers. These stoppers evoke the sights and sounds one finds in any large urban area where a variety of cultures come together. *T-Fan Stopper,* 1992, combines silver, brass, and four rows of discarded white painted wooden golf tees with a functioning cork. The tees create a pattern reminiscent of a Northwest Coast Indian mask or other Native American feathered headdresses. Bally's use of cast-off tees for the stopper also recalls the use of found objects for the creation of sculpture in African societies, where the value of the work was not derived from the materials employed as much as from the handwork of the artist and the function of the piece.

Cross-cultural references appear in many of Bally's stoppers. *Kalimba 6,* 1992, continues a series which has specific African influences in its designs. Topped with six spines, similar to the forms on an African finger harp, the stopper's title is obviously related to the African musical instrument of the same name. The *Calthrop Bottlecork,* 1992, appears tool-like and it is based upon medieval war weapons, though it is equally suggestive of darker contemporary urban influences such as the shapes and configurations of martial arts weapons and Ninja stars. The forms that Bally uses are rich in allusions to their original sources but his works are never overpowered by those allusions. Rather, there is a gentle sense of influence and an overall impression that the works are the products of an inquisitive, contemporary mind and flawless design and execution.

Bally comments: "I enjoy forms which are derivatives of shapes common to my urban environment – ranging from the crafts of ancient cultures to the most ordinary objects and tools found in hardware stores and scrap yards".[5]

In 1990 and 1991 Bally's collaborative experiments with his then studio mate ROY resulted in combinations of recycled aluminum street signs, found metal bottle caps, and sterling silver. The impetus for this unusual meeting of materials was both economic and ecological as the artist sought ways to make products more affordable and available to a broader public combined with his growing concern for the environment and the waste by-products produced in the making of objects.

Combining the traditional metal's techniques of hand-raising, riveting, and planishing with industrial methods, such as lathe-turning and press-die-forming, Bally opened the door to the use of materials and processes once thought unsuitable for a craftsman. Street signs are powerful components of these works. In their original state, the signs have words or visual instructions that are universally recognized. In their new life as fine art, these signs still carry some of their original associations; however, they are truncated and fragmented so only portions of their former messages are revealed.

75% Bowl, 1993, is made from a sign advising that the driver was ¾ mile from some destination. Portions of the fraction show through in the bowl's center. That fraction suggested both the title of the piece as well as the inspiration for its decorative surface, in which 75% of the lip is inset with metal pop bottle caps. That this piece is intentionally only ¾ completed is indicated by the scribe marks on the remaining quarter of the bowl's lip indicating where other bottle caps could have been inserted. Signs which included "½" and "1" in their texts predictably became the genesis for *50% Bowl* and *100% Bowl.* There is a fragmented, Cubist quality to these numbers which partially reveal themselves in a Bally bowl as if one were reading a highway sign obscured by tree branches or deciphering a semi-folded note.

Bally's interest in solutions to environmental issues through actions is exemplified in his *35 Layer Bowl,* and *Nest-Vessels,* 1993. In *35 Layer Bowl,* thirty-five pre-cut portions of street signs were pressed together under great force and trimmed internally to create a bowl which contrasts with the painted portions of the signs that now make up a brightly patterned lip. Lathe-turned scrap produced from this piece was pressed on die-forms, creating a pair of basket-like, but non-woven, metal vessels. Bally states: "These pieces...reflect an ongoing need to break away from more traditional metalsmithing media by using discarded materials... Artists must consider the environment and find new ways of using these friendlier materials." With the *Nest* pieces he believes that: "On a much smaller scale my process simulates trash compacting. This trash is now *useful.* Ironically, the scrap of one piece created two pieces of comparable size."[6]

Vessel with a Silver Heart, 1993, is formed of aluminum signs, turned inside out to create a convex, shiny, aluminum-gray vessel. The exterior has been pierced with decorative holes to provide glimpses of the colors emanating from the painted portions within, as if from the interior of a cave or body. The piece normally rests, tilted, on the lower convex half. The upper portion is hollow in its center and lined with a hand raised silver vessel within a vessel – the *heart* of this piece. This work becomes the visual equivalent of a poem. The heart is the center of the body and its emotions. Silver, the *heart* of the metalsmith's media, forms the center or heart of this bowl. The meeting of the refined and the everyday is especially effective and the artist's ability to impart a regal quality to the once-humble signs is based on his mastery of metalsmithing techniques and the interesting dichotomy that results when society's castoffs meet the hands of an intelligent craftsman.

Litmus Bowls, 1994, are wall mounted, shield-like pieces which, for Bally, relate to Medieval Art. "As a kid, visits to museums and castles in Europe allowed me to appreciate medieval metalwork and heraldry. The timeless techniques and forms discovered in the armories ... continue to intrigue me. The scrap street signs are materials ripe for the battles of this decade; their obvious environmental message: the mockery of precious materials which are symbolic of the American struggle for wealth and success and their subtle defiance of authority."[7]

Bally's work does have the same paradoxical sense of menace and attraction that many feel upon entering a large city with its mixture of thrills and unknown dangers. *Litmus Bowls* is both a contemporary descendant of European heraldry and evocative of a prized hubcap collection hanging on the wall of a teenager's urban clubhouse. It is this cross referencing that provides Bally's work with much of its intellectual strength and weight, as the viewer is encouraged to gather nuances of both art historical and contemporary cultural references.

There is a poetic quality to Bally's work that stems from the viewer's personal associations with the artist's found materials and blending of cultural references and techniques that is peculiar to our place and time in history. Bally blends traditional European craft techniques, contemporary American urban detritus, and an interest in the found object seen in many non-Western cultures. The purity of his forms, the quality of his intellectual constructs, and the witty way in which he assembles disparate images and elements into working, cohesive wholes have been hallmarks throughout this young artist's career. Boris Bally has investigated the potential of making handmade jewelry and hollowware more visible in contemporary culture. The metals field and its followers can expect this development to proceed and they can also continue to expect the unexpected in his work, as his achievements define new territory for craft media.

Bruce Pepich is the Director of the Wustum Museum in Racine Wisconsin.

NOTES

[1] Quote by the artist, "Pittsburgh Regional Crafts Exhibition", exhibition catalogue, Diane M. Douglas, Juror, Pittsburgh Crafts Consortium, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1993, p. 4.

[2] Quote by the artist, "More Than One-Studio Production Now," exhibition catalogue, John Perreault, curator, forward by Janet Kardon, American Craft Museum, New York, New York, 1992, p. 14.

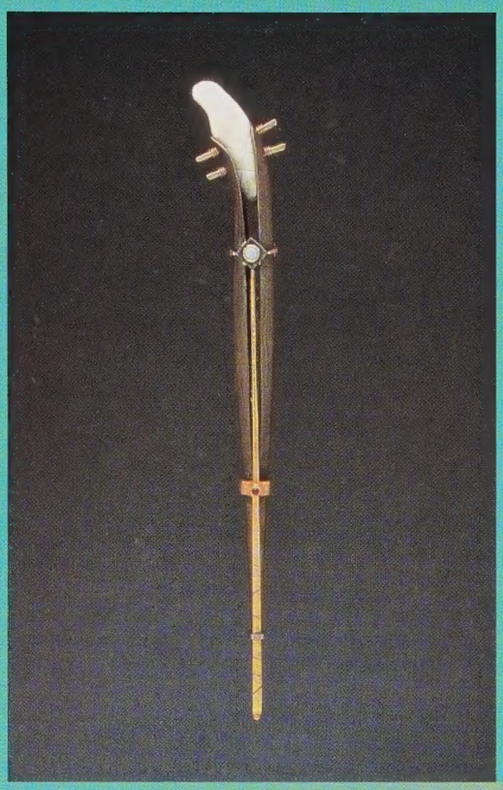
[3] Brunelle, Lynn, "Urban G(Litter)," *Metalsmith*, Winter, 1994, p. 37.

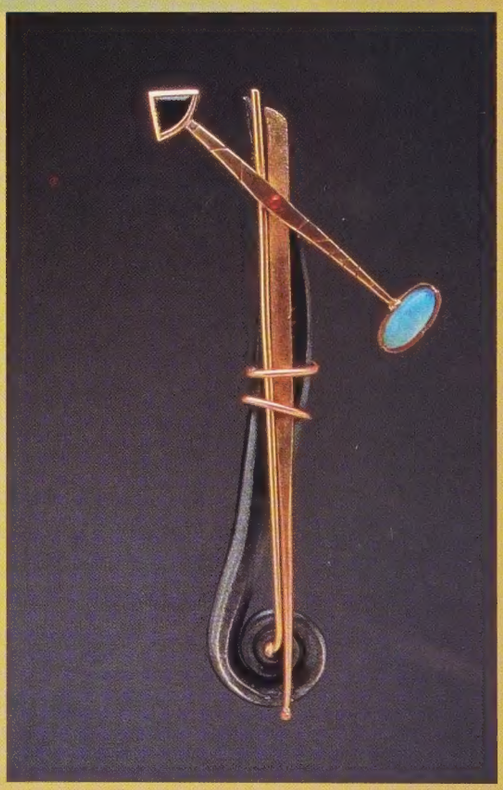
[4] Quote by the artist, "Pittsburgh Regional Crafts Exhibition," exhibition catalogue, Diane M. Douglas, Juror, Pittsburgh Crafts Consortium, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1993, p 4.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Quote by the artist, "Challenge V: International Lathe-Turned Objects," exhibition catalogue, William Daley, Albert B. LeCoff, Michael Monroe and Davira Taragin, jurors, The Wood Turning Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1994, pp. 2-3.

[7] Quote by the artist, "Metals Invitational '94," exhibition catalogue, guest curator, Christina DePaul, Emily Gallery, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, 1994, p. 3.





TOP

Lucy series #2 , (brooch), 1995
bronze, gold, opal, ruby, tooth, 6" high

BOTTOM

Sorry Jackson; chameleon series,
(brooch), 1995
sterling silver, gold, opal, ruby, slate, 4" high

TOP

Pupa , (brooch), 1992
sterling silver, shibuichi, gold, tourmaline crystal,
sapphire, pearl, dentallium shell, 5" high

BOTTOM

Skin and Bones , (brooch), 1995
gold, spectralite, ruby, 5" high

TOP

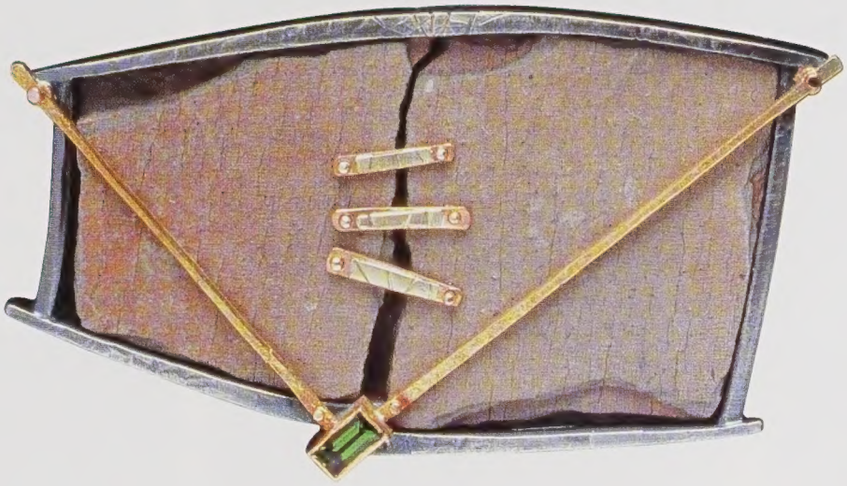
Lucy series #I, (brooch), 1995
bronze, gold, opal, tooth, 6" high

BOTTOM

Mood; chameleon series , (brooch), 1995
sterling silver, gold, ruby, opal,
tourmaline, 4" high

Observations

Andrew Cooperman



Text: Megan Corwin
Photographs: Douglas Yaple

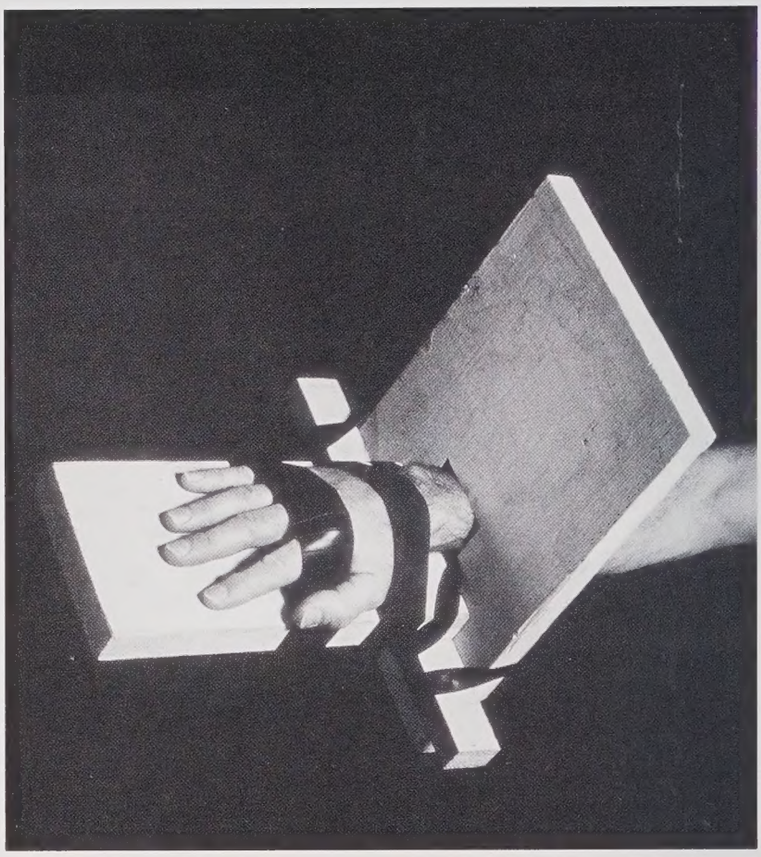
A textured surface is information to Andrew Cooperman. Torn, distressed, and manipulated surfaces that weave a common thread throughout his work translate a deep attraction for the world of insects and chameleons into metaphors for the human eye.

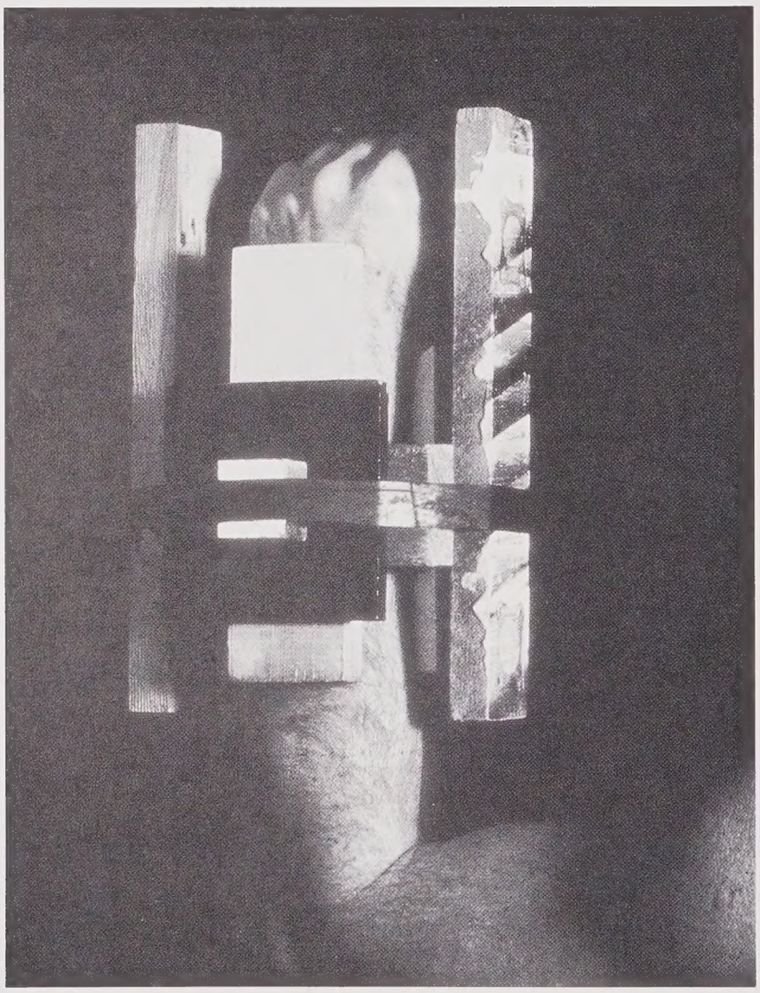
Stretched, broken, wrapped, and banded, with the sense of an interior object barely glimpsed and sometimes barely contained, the cocoon has been a source for the many pieces in the chrysalis series. He also uses highly contrasting stones and non-metal materials as details that accent the tips of tapered, arching forms, or are glimpsed behind wrapped, distressed metal. These details can express the specific qualities of a source for a piece, such as the opals used in the chameleon series to echo the color change that aids this animal's survival.

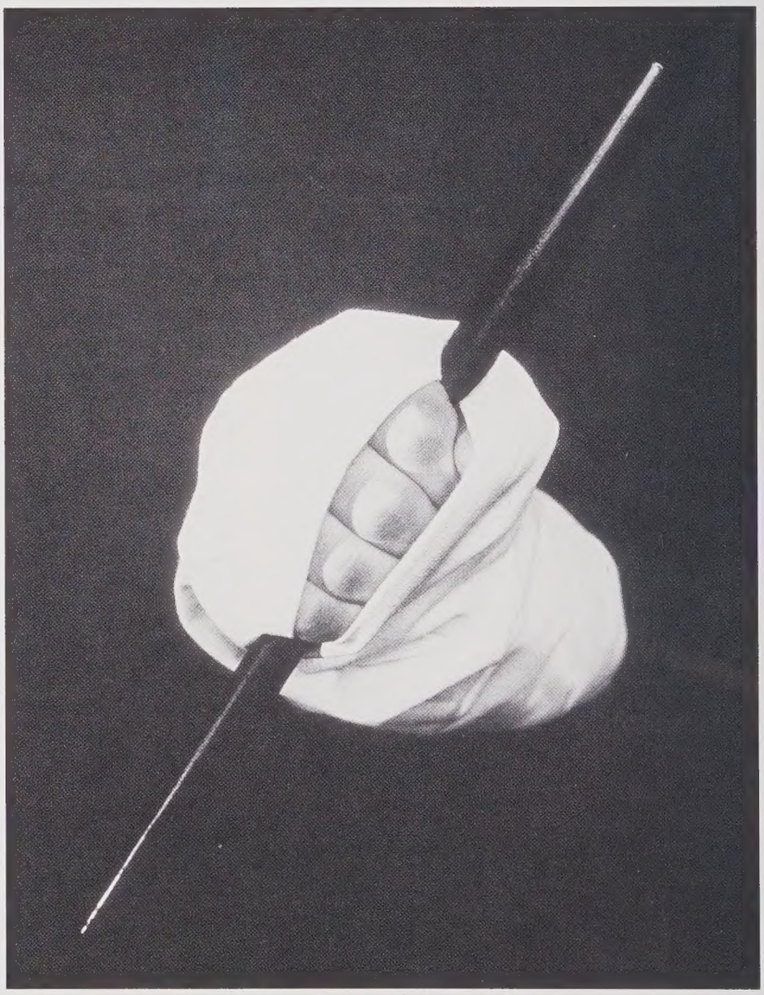
Cooperman tempers the specific organic source material's impact on his work with an archaeologist's fascination with the construction of things, the marks left behind, and connections which are both physical and implied. He describes surface marks as scars that tell the "....accumulated history of a thing and give it character". Cooperman is a collector of images. Repairs, such as metal bands bolted into two sides of a cracked cement wall are not only visually beautiful, but they furnish information as to the stresses on the wall and the characteristics of cement. They also suggest a relationship of bands of metal to bandages for the body.

Rivets are used extensively and almost always visibly. Unplanned cracks and fissures are often exhibited and they lend a well designed piece the tension of natural beauty. He often fuses together cracked elements and forges the ends into exquisite tapers, moving from crudeness to refinement with highly developed technical skill. For Cooperman the tools he uses and the construction of the tools themselves link his endeavors and his works with previous users and with previous societies.

ABOVE
Repair, (brooch), 1994
sterling silver, gold, slate, tourmaline
3" wide







Pierre Degen

plays by his own rules

TEXT: KAREN S. CHAMBERS

"There are no rules there. At one point there will be an idea...and I will find a material that is suitable to express that idea. In some other cases, I will pick a piece of material and think 'Oh, that's nice piece of material, that's a nice piece of rubber, or a nice piece of card and I will play with it and eventually make it into a piece....But there are no rules....The same in the way of making. If I'm going to bash something together with two nails and a piece of wood and a bit of cellotape if necessary or if I have to spend three weeks putting something together very accurately, going to work on machinery and with a milling machine very precisely, I will do it if I feel it will be necessary for the piece. There's absolutely no hard line."[1]

It is that free-wheeling approach to materials and process that has led the now London-based Degen to create some of the most innovative *jewelry* of the time. He has challenged the concept of jewelry as precious by using materials as diverse as perspex, computer chips, tin cans, wine corks, and even incorporating the shadows of his pieces as a part of the visual experience. He has transcended his own traditional training as he freely admits he quite likes "if it can be done easily, even if someone else can do it quite easily". If a tin can of one of his bracelets rusts, it can be easily replaced by the owner, he notes. He has questioned scale saying, "We are used to seeing people wearing jewelry, why not jewelry wearing people?"[2] as he has made giant propellers to be worn on the back or ladders to be carried. Quite simply for Degen, there are no rules.

A similar, almost serendipitously natural progression has marked the life of Degen, who was born in La Neuveville, Switzerland, in 1947. He did not start out to be a jeweler; he intended to become an architectural model maker. But as there were no schools, a model maker encouraged him to study something that required him to be adept with his hands, to work finely and accurately – jewelry. Degen enrolled at the Ecole d'Arts Appliqués in La Chaud-de-Fond, Switzerland, and fell in love with the craft. The program was divided into learning all the traditional jewelry techniques and drawing classes. There was no integration of the courses as he learned to set stones, studied art history, (but not the history of jewelry) and drew in composition or technical drawing classes, or from plaster casts and the landscape. There was no awareness of what was happening with contemporary jewelry as the school was geared to meet the demands of the trade.

LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

Glove, 1993
wood, inner tube, nails
33 x 10 x 23 cm

Glove, 1993
wood, inner tube
29 x 24 x 25 cm

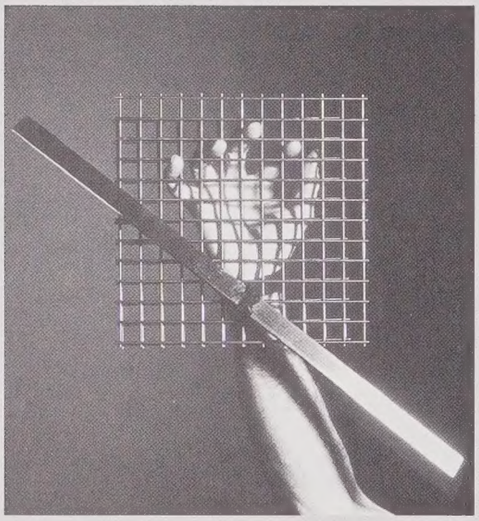
Glove, 1986
canvas, steel
30 x 37 x 10 cm

Glove, 1993
wood, inner tube
24 x 18 x 15 cm

THIS PAGE
Glove, 1986
card, paper
32 x 25 x 19 cm

When Degen graduated in 1968, he took a job as a designer at Bucherer in Lucerne, which he describes as a "high street jewelry shop" that required "very mundane and very run-of-the mill jewelry". At the same time he was taking drawing classes at the Kunstgewerbe Schule. After three years, Degen decided that he "wanted to travel around the world and I thought that knowing a bit of English would help". He went to London with the idea of staying six months or a year before setting off on his world travels, but a series of lucky circumstances led him to settle there permanently. At a jewelry shop in Bond Street, London's equivalent of Fifth Avenue, he met Peter Lyon who was teaching jewelry at the Central School of Art and Design in London. Lyon invited the young Swiss designer to visit the school and when he did, he met the head of the department who promptly offered him a job as the studio technician. Putting off his travels for a paying job, Degen eagerly accepted. He met Catherine Mannheim at a student-and-faculty exhibition and casually asked her if she knew of any available teaching positions. She let him know when she decided to leave her post at the Middlesex Polytechnic and in 1973 he became a part-time lecturer there, an association that continues to the present.

The one quality that could be said to characterize all of Degen's work is curiosity. Around the time he graduated from the Ecole d'Arts Appliqués, he saw a book of German jewelers that included the work of Claus Bury. Degen was very impressed with Bury's seminal work combining acrylic and gold and he immediately bought some "perspex and started to make some pieces with it. From there on, it didn't stop". Degen became interested in non-precious materials and excited by the possibility of working with them with as much refinement as he had with gold and silver. Christopher Reid in *Crafts* magazine, described the resulting pieces from the early '70s as being "in a recognizably Continental idiom: flat pieces of perspex, plain or colored, were shaped, perforated, engraved, superimposed, and generally arranged with care for meticulous finish".[3] Degen added an element of visual complication with the use of mirrored surfaces and cylindrical acrylic rods through which parallel lines were viewed creating a kinetic effect. Reid saw "this penchant for optical trickery" as "a sign of dissatisfaction with the flat, cool look".[4] These works were followed in 1972 with a playful series suggested by Ralph Turner, partner and director of the influential London gallery Electrum. He persuaded Degen to do a series of *throw-away* jewelry in acrylic foil, which freed Degen to embark on works made of collaged parts, all decidedly non-precious: aerosol can nozzles, curtain-runners, plastic clothes pins, plastic clothes' tags, right-angle plastic tubes used for washing machine plumbing, and electronic components. This recycling of materials has reappeared in Degen's work of the last few years as he has made bracelets from tin cans, brooches from champagne corks and rubber bands, and kinetic toys from salvaged metal.



By the late 1970s, Degen had become interested in the three-dimensional quality of the assemblaged pieces and the shadows which they cast. The shadows became an integral part of the pieces and he began a series of shadow pieces or *Extensions* as he has called them. Made of steel rod and thin cord, in strong light they were nearly indistinguishable from their cast shadows. Reid has noted that their most radical quality was "self-effacement: for the first time we are presented with jewelry that, so far from drawing attention to itself, seeks to hide amongst ambiguities and shadow play".[5]

The collaged works came from physically working with the components until they were "right". The shadow works began with a tight sketch that Degen would then replicate in thin wire but he found them "...a bit forced. Instead of doing a sketch and trying to imitate the sketch in the material, why not sketch directly with the material?...In a way it was the beginning of working far more spontaneously, which I haven't really stopped."

As the vitality of the shadow pieces was dependent upon the wearer moving to change the angle of the shadow, Degen also became interested in the relationship of object to wearer. He made a series of *bracelets* that are simple wraps of black cotton coated with bee's wax and graphite that must be wrapped on the wearer's wrist and secured by an assortment of pins, selected by the wearer. The result is a collaboration between maker and wearer. Paul Filmer found that this work was an "extension of the craft of making jewelry into the act of wearing it: a valuable contemporary re-assertion of the consummation of craft in use".[6]

LEFT
Glove, 1993
steel, inner tube
39 x 20 x 20 cm

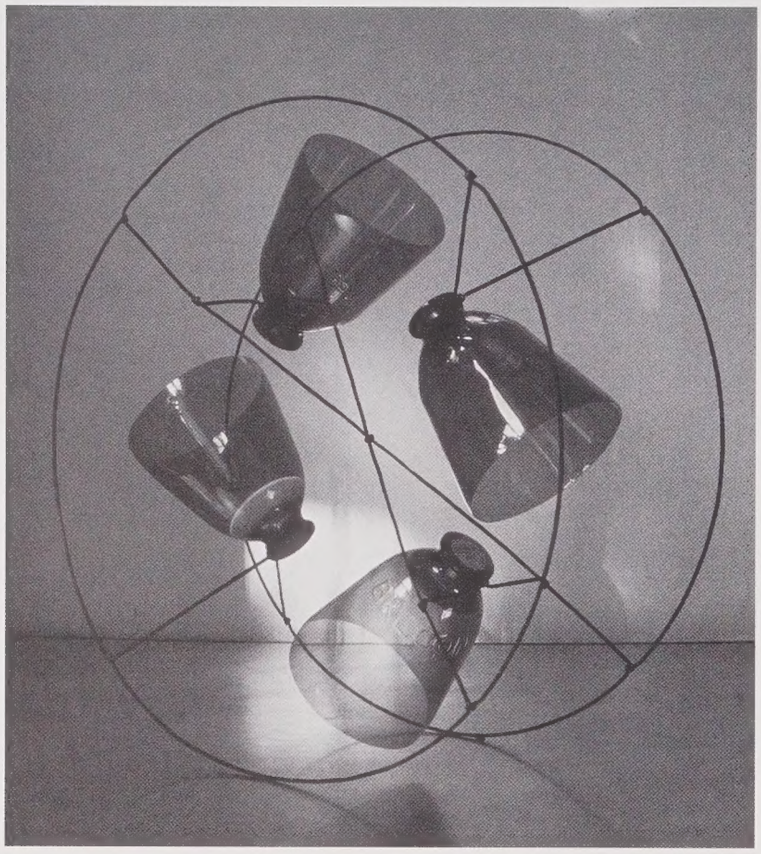
ABOVE
Large Loop, 1982
glass fiber rod, paper, string
145 cm dia.

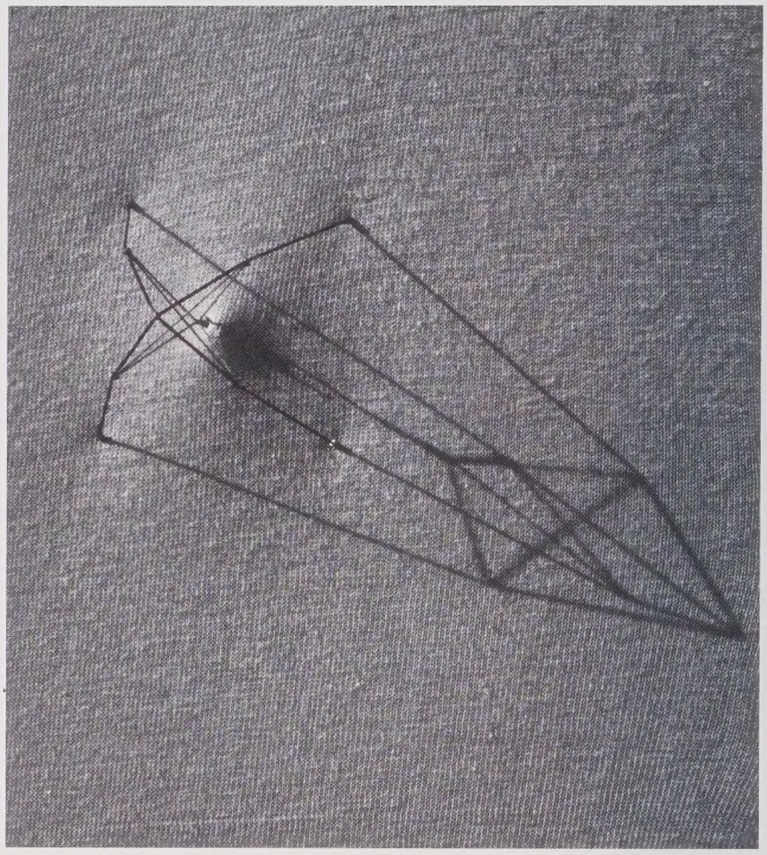
ABOVE, RIGHT
Large Propeller, 1982
silk, wood, nylon cord,
bamboo, steel
160 x 160 x 180 cm

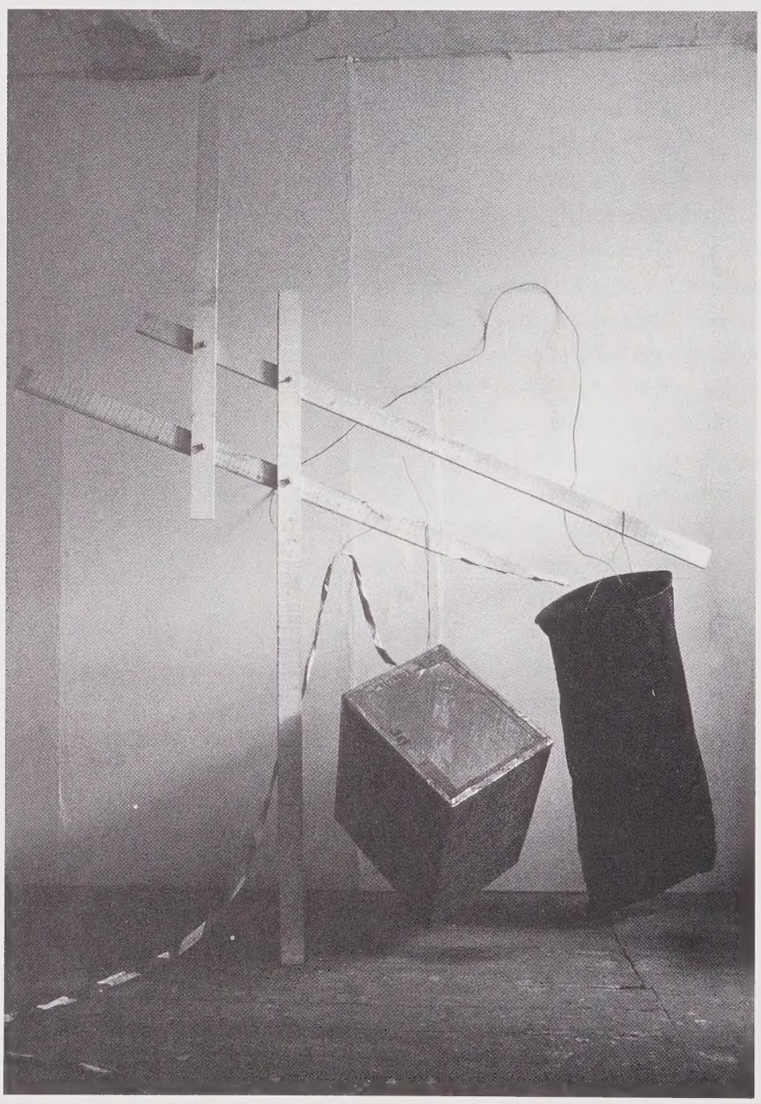
Also in the early 1980s Degen continued to explore the relationship between object and wearer by greatly enlarging the scale of his pieces. For a 1982 exhibition at the Crafts Council's gallery in London, he created objects that inverted the notion of wearer and worn. Rory Spence writing in the exhibition catalog noted that: "although Degen's work is becoming less and less conventionally 'wearable,' its relationship to the human body is paradoxically of increasing importance."[7] Degen showed a giant pinwheel in a Claes Oldenburgian vein that was worn on the back. A rucksack filled with gardening tools and a bundle of brushwood had a touch of the Italian *Arte Povera* where the whole idea of the preciousity of art materials was challenged. A gaily painted ladder was to be carried over the *wearer's* shoulder, calling attention to the concepts of utility, adornment, and the use of jewelry as symbol. These works could be seen as "outsize jewelry, portable sculpture, or even tools with no definable use"[8] as Spence suggests but for Degen as a jeweler it is the relationship of object to body that is key. The fact that these objects were made to be worn, even if for only short periods of time, changes them. They are not purely sculpture. They are more interesting to Degen because of that. "The fact that you can handle it and you can do things with your body to it, it creates possibilities that are not there when it's just an object. I'm not saying they are better possibilities or they're more exciting to the viewers, but certainly to me they are exciting," he explains.

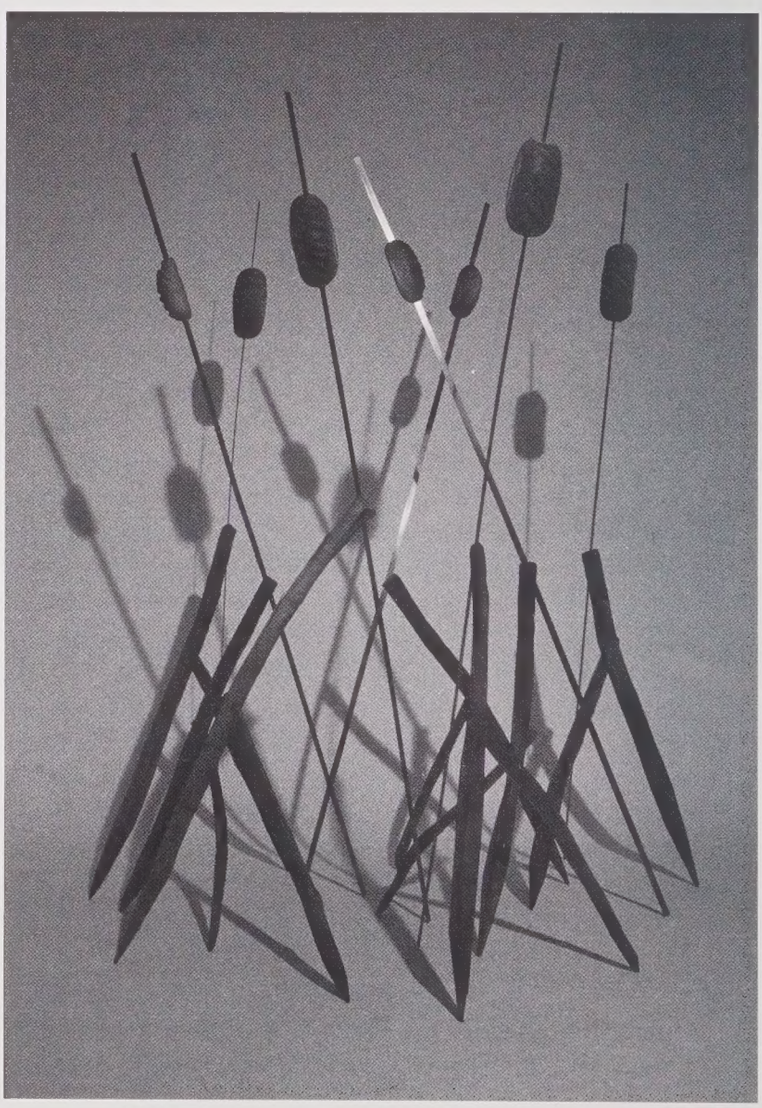
These objects were not necessarily comfortable to wear, but discomfort simply as a way of emphasizing the relationship of object to wearer was not what Degen was aiming for. He conceived them as being worn for a short period of time, incorporating the temporal aspect of performance art or theater in his work. "If there is someone to wear it at the time when people see it, they can see it for a while, see what it does, see how it works, and then some photographs can be taken or video or whatever. I think that's it."

Some of Degen's strongest work is concerned with the relationship of object to body, materials, and theater, vis-à-vis content if not narrative. In 1986 during a residency as a visiting artist in Australia at the South College of Advanced Education, Adelaide, and at Curtin University, Perth, Degen began a series of gloves. The artist has continued the series since then, making a glove or two when an idea presents itself. The idea can be either content or materials driven. In *Behind the Wall,* there is a door in a wall and behind the wall a hand is trapped. The piece was inspired by a photograph with: "a text of a woman who had been tortured and she heard one of the chaps who was there making a phone call to his wife saying he was a bit delayed and he would be a little bit late at home. That's why in a way that glove came because you don't know what's happening behind the wall."









OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

Aeolian Toy
plastic bottle, wire, cork
36 x 14 cm

Shadow Piece, (brooch), 1979
pivot steel, nylon thread
4 x 3.5 cm

Sculpture, 1993
wood, coal, bag, plastic, metal, lightbulbs
3.4 x 2.3 x 0.7 m

Sculpture, 1993
wood, steel, bread, polyurethane foam
2.94 x 1.10 x 0.90 m

LEFT
Wraparound Arm Piece, 1981
cotton, graphite, soot, beeswax,
wood, copper, steel

It is rare for Degen's content to be so directly influenced or inspired. More often it is formal issues that intrigue him although this does not preclude a message: "I had one that is just a heavy cotton tube and you put it over your arm and then you grab in your hand, a heavy steel bar. It's a hefty, heavy steel bar, black and then you put back the sleeve of it over your hand and you just see the knuckle and the steel bar and when you hold it and you see it, there's something really nasty about it. But when I did it, I didn't do it to be like that, but it just ended up like that. It looks like somebody is going to do someone in with that steel bar and the fact that it's masked as well, the hand, it is something very reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan with hooded people. But it didn't start with that in mind. It's just because I played with the material and suddenly I got that sleeve on and then I grabbed the bar with it."

The gloves are certainly not meant to be worn for long periods and they could be seen as small sculpture when not worn, but the fact Degen conceived them for the body endows them with greater potency. "The body is a very good vehicle for it, it's very good for the idea, it's a starting point because the fact that I decide that it's going to be wearable or you can put it, fit it on your body, it gives it its whole reason to be made," he says. "It's a catalyst to produce the work really."

The narrative aspect of the gloves and the prop-like characteristics of his larger body works could be considered a prelude to a new development in Degen's career. In 1992 he worked with the choreographer Emilyn Claid to create objects to be used in a dance as a part of a series at the South Bank Centre in London called "Craft-Dance Intermix" Although he admits that the collaboration was less successful than he would have hoped, he is eager to do more things for the stage and is currently talking with Angela Woodhouse about such a project.

Degen's career has been a series of explorations of what can be seen as the basic concerns of jewelry: materials, technique, symbolic power, symbiotic relationship of object to wearer, and preciousness. Jewelry is an intimate art for both the maker and the wearer. What Degen aims for in all of his work is to make it special, an intimate quality, absolutely personal, to transcend "all the factors, which are often so important to people: how long it took to make, is it beautifully crafted, is it expensive....If, regardless of those factors, someone likes a piece or finds something special in it, then I think it's really great. It means the piece has got something, hasn't it?" Degen's work has got something special.

Karen Chambers is a frequent writer on the crafts. She lives in New York, NY.

Notes

[1] All quotes, unless otherwise noted, are taken from an interview with the artist in London, 21 July 1995.

[2] Neil Hansen, "Pierre Degen", *Craft Quarterly*, Issue 4, Summer 1982, p. 3.

[3] Christopher Reid, "Shadowplay", *Crafts*, May/June 1979, pp. 17-18.

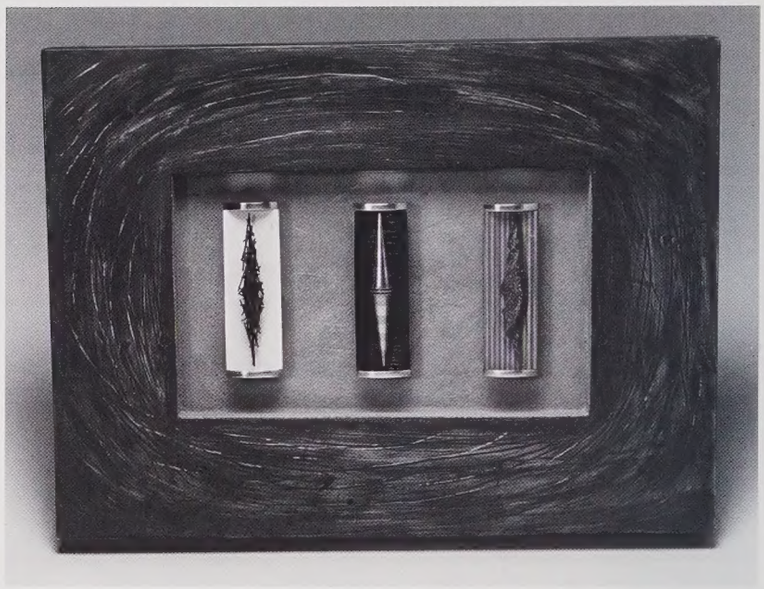
[4] Ibid., p. 18.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Paul Filmer, "Pierre Degen: Jewelry", *Crafts*, November/December 1981, p. 51.

[7] Rory Spence, untitled essay, *Pierre Degen: New Work*, London: Crafts Council, 1982, np.

[8] Ibid.



TRIPTYCH:
Explorations of the Brooch

Gallery at Craft Alliance
Saint Louis, MO
September 15 through October 28

By Noel Leicht

ABOVE
Joe Muench
The Chrysalis Series
sterling, bone, steel, copper, wood
Photograph: David Kingsbury

ABOVE RIGHT
Gina Pankowski
Anatomy Brooch #1, 1995
sterling, garnets
1¾ x 1¾ x 1"
Photograph: Douglas Yaple

The brooch seems to be coming into its own as a non-functional sculptural object as evidenced in "TRIPTYCH: Explorations of the Brooch". Thirty-six American artists submitted brooches, many that pushed the concept beyond the traditional format. As if following the recent trend in teapots – in which artists overlook the need to steep hot tea when they create a teapot – wearabililty of the brooches did not seem relevant as many artists opted to pursue a variety of sculptural concerns during their making.

Those brooches in "Explorations" made bold sculptural statements in the use of materials, recycled findings, three-dimensional design, and by their mere size and proportion. The artists included pin stems and tie tacks for the pieces were, indeed, meant to hang; not necessarily on a jacket or sweater, but as sculptural reliefs on a wall.

To emphasize this trend, curator Barbara Jordan attached the brooches directly to the wall, setting them apart with white frames that blended with the stark whiteness of the gallery walls. Placing the work at eye level, without glass made the brooches readily visible and accessible like other three-dimensional art, a genuine improvement over traditional jewelry case displays.

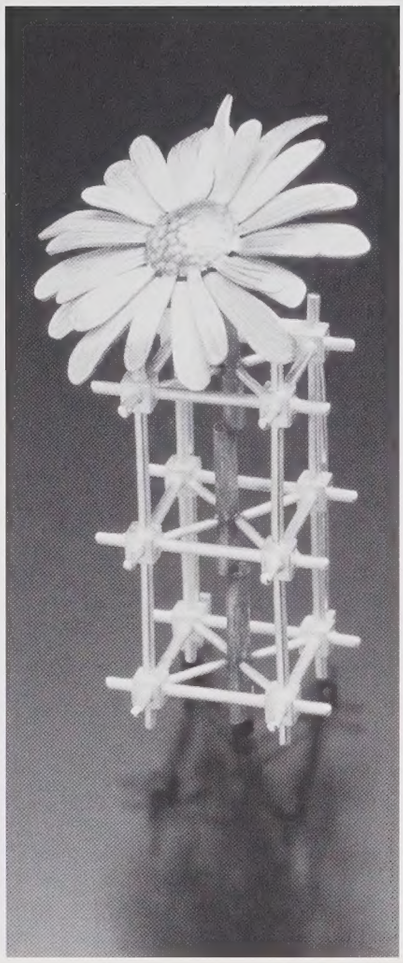
As in most brooch shows, artists served up an eclectic array of work using a mix of found materials, precious metals, new techniques, narrative themes, and new design approaches. In his *Chrysalis* series, Joe Muench exhibited the virtuosity of a master craftsman with his extensive use of materials. Muench's brooches employed silver with polished bone and steel, charred wood and striped married metals, and laminated wood and textured, patinaed copper. The exploration of materials exemplifies Muench's determination to continually experiment within his medium and to test his skills as a maker and technician.

Robert Dancik contributed a strong presence to the show with his three *Navigational Aids*. Each featured found objects embedded in concrete set in thick silver bezels from which hung small boat-like structures suspended on heavy wire. The brooches, while appearing heavy and un-wearable, were thoughtful, well-balanced designs with moveable parts.

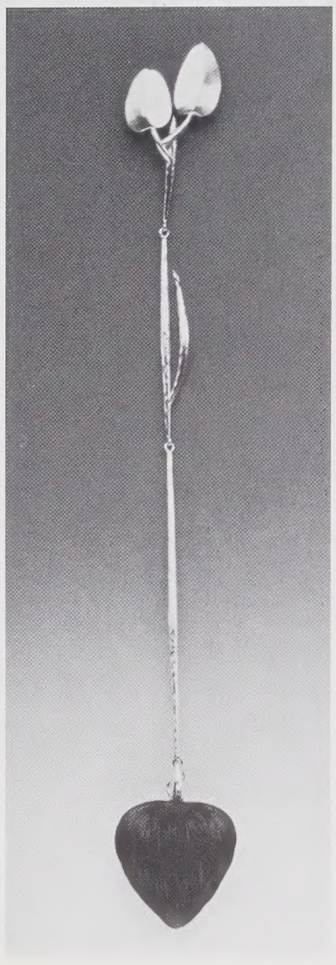
Gina Pankowski created her first brooches for "Explorations". The intricate wire *Anatomy Brooches*, were superbly crafted and extraordinarily dimensional in their airy molecular-like imagery. They seem to float out from the wall with their circular appendages ready to orbit into space.

Maria Phillips's *Triptych to Life #5* wall hanging narrates her overland journey west from part time metals student in St. Louis to graduate studies in Seattle. Her imagery of road maps, highways, gauges, asphalt, complicated infrastructures, and amorphous figures depict an almost spiritual journey into a new unknown.

RIGHT
Sara Shepherd
Therapy II, 1995
sterling, 18k
2 x 1 x 1"
Photograph: Douglas Yaple



FAR RIGHT
Sharon Church
Within and Without, 1995
14k yellow gold, carved ebony
9¾ x 1¼ x 1"
Photograph: Thomas Brummett



Sharon Church's elegant *Within and Without* is an innovative brooch/pendant design. A curvaceous heart-shaped pendant of carved ebony dangles gracefully from elongated links attached to a repousséd 14k leaf brooch. The sensuous elements of the ten-inch piece sway with the slightest body movement creating interesting options for the wearer.

Laurie Hall's *How to Climb Series* consists of *Matches*, *Plank*, and *Feet* which appropriately describe the linked elements that form her six to seven-inch articulated ladder-like brooch pendants.

Susan Bickford's *Three Becoming Four* is a figurative sculpture in which the artist tells the story of her growing family. The hollow form brooches of a man, a pregnant woman, and a dog are mounted on a round stand that is engraved with the couple's conversation. The figures have sturdy pin stems which are cleverly adapted for display.

Among the smaller more traditionally sized brooches, Michele Mercaldo's triptych (three-pieces-or-one) stands out for its exquisite simplicity and unique design. An ingenious work of miniature engineering, *Brooch #1*, an one-inch oxidized black silver frame fits over *Brooch #2*: a square brushed silver hollow form featuring a cutout which fits over *Brooch #3*: five tiny 14k gold spheres arranged in the shape of a cross. When the three individual brooches fit inside each other, the design provides a marvelous study in contrasts: texture, color, shape, and finish.

Sara Shepherd wears her heart (or daisy) on her sleeve with her triptych of brooches. The love narrative is obvious on close inspection as she implies that love is like a wheel of fortune (a married metals pinwheel) on which fate spins. Her second brooch shows a full bloom daisy, supported by an infrastructure; her third brooch is a limp daisy losing petals in the old game of "he loves me, he loves me not". Aptly titled *Therapy 1-2-3*, the designs stand up well on their own, with or without the narrative theme.

Emily Rosenfeld's brooches tell the story of three generations of women in her family. Using subtle, but erotic imagery, her small brushed silver elongated oval shapes form carefully riveted layers that frame tiny red threads wrapped into the simple designs.

The essence of simplicity is exemplified in Boo Poulin's three identical *I* shaped brooches. They appear almost whimsical in their movement across the wall which was achieved by changing the curve of the center cable by simply tacking the cross bar at a different angle.

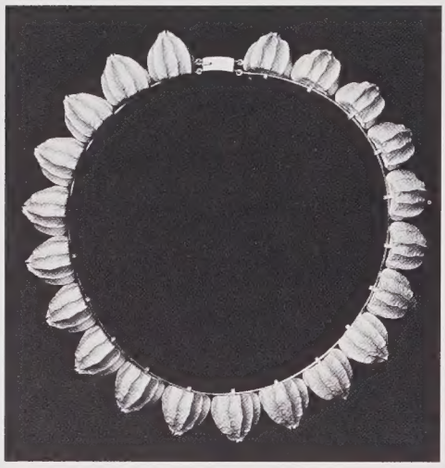
"Explorations" articulated the metals vocabulary being used by this generation of practicing and emerging metalsmiths. The vocabulary is broad, varied, thoughtful, concerned, humorous, gutsy and technically curious. Craft Alliance and its curator Barbara Jordan are to be commended for educating a community about contemporary metalsmithing and for encouraging artists to explore their medium.

Noel Leicht is a St. Louis metals artist and writer.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Japanese Lantern Necklace
18k

Tulip Pods
18k yellow gold



Donald Pywell: Golden Impressions of Andrew Wyeth

Brandywine River Museum
Chadds Ford, PA
November 24, 1995 – January 7, 1996

by Susan Jo Klein

If a jewelry exhibition could ever be described as *magical*, the display of Don Pywell's jewelry at the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, would certainly qualify. Upon entering a darkened room, visitors encounter the breathtaking sight of dramatically lit shadowboxes, each depicting a scene or detail from a painting by Andrew Wyeth. Positioned in a spotlight in each of these settings is one of the 23 pieces of jewelry that Don Pywell created for Betsy Wyeth, the wife of the famous Brandywine artist.

Enchanted by the miniature world of these elaborate dioramas – a 19th century world of rustic hay barns and scenic stone farmhouses – I had to remind myself that this was an exhibition of jewelry. But the rich 18k gold and the strength of the designs helped the jewelry hold its own within these detailed environments made by architectural model maker Timothy Mark Cole. (That is, with the exception of two or three *natural* displays obviously not created by Mr. Cole in which I had difficulty seeing the jewelry for the trees.) But, for this initial visit, I allowed myself to be transported by the beauty of the exhibition as a whole and to ponder on the intricacies of such a collaboration between painter, collector, goldsmith, and model maker.

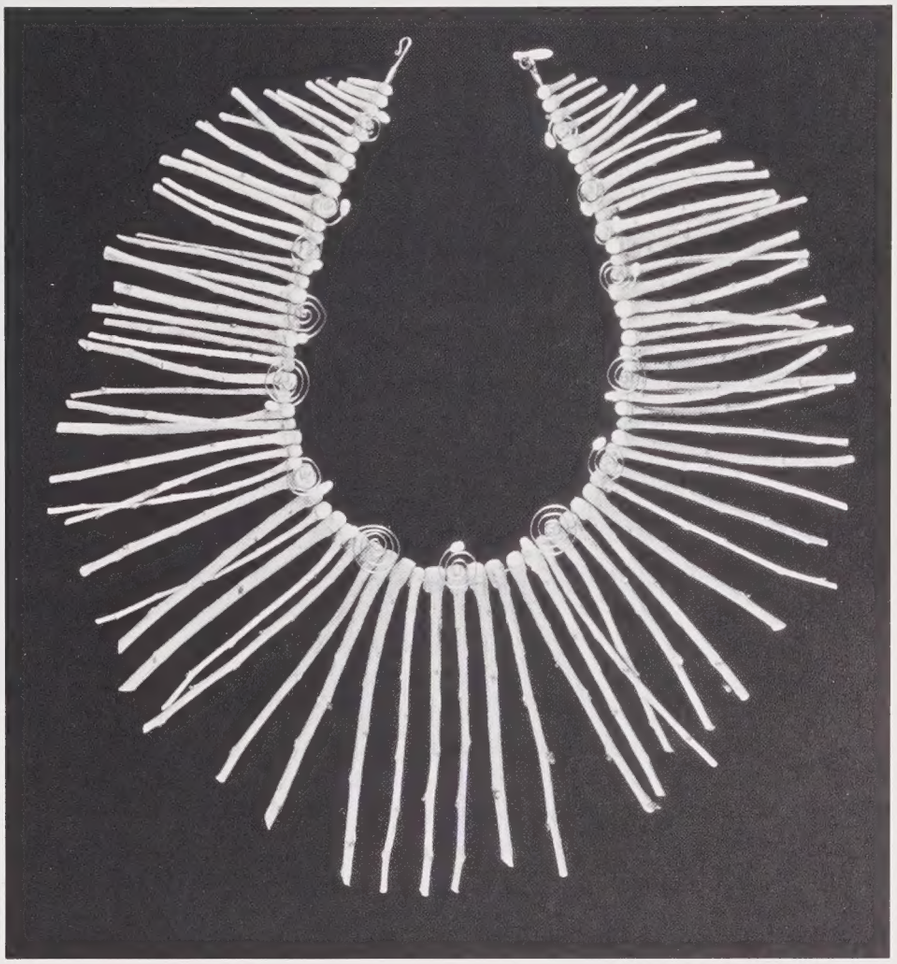
A few days later I returned to look at the jewelry after most of the Christmas-time visitors had gone home for the day, determined not to be seduced by the charming display.

Don Pywell is a master carver of wax and ivory. His ability to capture the textures found in nature is astounding. The 18k pale yellow gold *Corn Necklace* (inspired by Wyeth's painting *Winter Corn*, 1948) looks like miniature corn, complete with individual kernels and rippling veined leaves. The *Duel Oars Brooch* (from *The Duel*, 1976) shows every detail of the wood grain in the golden oar and tiny rivets in the oxidized silver *leather* handholds. And the *Blackberry Brooch and Earrings* (from *Blackberry Branch*, drybrush, 1943) were ready for picking with their lush red cabochon rubies and frosted 18k green gold leaves. The carved ivory of the *Venetian Mask Necklace* (from *Winter Carnival*, drybrush, 1985) was wonderfully bold and sensuous, although somewhat marred, for me, by being what I consider a *forbidden* material.

As a fastenings and findings enthusiast, I was a little more critical of the way Mr. Pywell joins his jewelry units together. I'd have liked to have seen the *Japanese Lantern Necklace* with the lantern units mechanically attached to each other rather than strung on a heavy neck wire. The plain shiny box catch did not integrate with the design. Other necklaces, namely the *River Cove Mussels Necklace* were more successful in that respect, although both the *Corn Necklace* and *Hayledge Necklace* had heavy hooks that looked awkward and crude in contrast to their harmonious, flowing designs. The solid gold cuff bracelets all appeared to have good hidden hinges and catches, which gave them a sense of unity and completion.

Undoubtedly somewhat limited by the traditional subject matter, Don Pywell has been successful in creating jewelry which is sensuous, elegant, and rich in texture and bold (although occasionally predictable) in design.

Susan Jo Klein is a metalsmith who lives in Philadelphia, PA.



Untitled Necklace, 1994
tree branches, 18k, pearls
Photograph: Jum Milmoe

Jewelry with an Attitude: New work by Robert Ebendorf

MIA Gallery
Seattle, WA
June 1 – July 2, 1995

by William Baran-Mickle

Of Robert Ebendorf's 29 works, 10 necklaces were elegantly displayed in side-by-side rectangular wall cases. Looking like special collectors pages, they unified the works which could easily have seemed too diverse and busy. They also subtly brought a sense of preciousness to a compilation of previously owned, used, and discarded materials that often do not command a second glance.

Vanessa Lynn wrote that Ebendorf's work "has found its core in contradiction – in a dialogue between tradition and change, which he has gone on to embroider and embellish." He certainly continues in that vein. A traditional format – wearable, occasionally precious in material, and with settings a jeweler would construct – is juxtaposed with crude objects I call "shards of civilization". The object vocabulary ranges from the softened shards of colored glass or ceramics, to selected bits of machine-pressed aluminum, spoons, shells, pearls, fossils, and twigs. Many of the remnants seemed to be of mid-20th Century manufacture. Fragments are often jewel-mounted, pointing out their significance, just as a poet might isolate an interesting word or phrase that on reading lacks a context.

In a number of the necklaces, a pendant-spoon doubles as a *niche* in which is exhibited a cross or shard. The spoon shank splits in decorative curls, linked to the necklace by a can's pull-tab, or an upside-down ring shank. A neck wrap system of coiled branches or of variously shaped, forged metal links with interspersed rock shards completes the work.

The set of rings elegantly highlights selected shards by being buried shank deep in black sand contained in individual wooden boxes. All shanks are the same anyway. If owned as a *set* it suggests, one need only select the *top* for the day. In an odd way, this is a twist on the concept of the mood ring, albeit an intellectually aesthetic version. Similarly, the 5 bracelets all share the same steel link pattern and isolate a single shard. They too have a comfortable and relaxed character.

The variety of treatments used in this diverse collection allows for the best understanding of the title "Jewelry with an Attitude". The viewer is confronted with a refined crudeness, a relaxed sense of ornamentation integrated with minimally formed wire. Ebendorf cares that his object-statements not be disregarded by the wearer. He goes to the trouble to back rough materials with smooth, trimmed olive-oil tins and carefully folded corners. Ultimately he is concerned that the wearer not fear the image or the unusual materials. It may be rough, but it doesn't need to hurt or mar.

The most elegant of the necklaces, is made of small tree branches. Carefully selected pieces are cut to include the twig, which then hangs down to create a fan of branch-twigs. This neckpiece simply demonstrates Ebendorf's major gift: the combination of the selective eye with the jewelers refined skill.

We trust that these ornaments conjure up worthy observations of our culture and reveal how an artist uses cultural detritus as material, becoming potently and surprisingly attractive. While this is not ground breaking work, it does not seek to be anything other than Ebendorf's personal challenge to observe, consider, record, and ultimately share his artistic self.

William Baran-Mickle is a metalsmith and a frequent contributor to this magazine. He lives in Rochester, NY.

4th Generation; 6 Jewelers from Munich

Bettina Dittlman, Anuschka Corazon-Walch, Karl Fritsch, Karen Pontoppidian, Bettina Speckner, Norman Weber

Woods Gerry Gallery,
Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, RI
August 17 – September 17, 1995

Karl Fritsch
Brooch, 1995
iron, gold, ruby

By Alyssa Dee Krauss

"Everything you declare is jewelry is jewelry"
Otto Kunsli[1]

More than just a new branch on the family tree "4th Generation; 6 Jewelers from Munich" is an exciting and provocative collection of jewelry. The show follows a 1993 exhibition in Munich, that celebrated three generations of jewelry instructors from the German Fine Art Academies[2]. The title suggests that we view the work while considering those forefathers (specifically, Herman Jünger and Otto Kunsli, as all six jewelers and the curator of "4th Generation..." studied with one or the other). Evidently, these professors have had a discernible influence on the academic and professional jewelry worlds, and accordingly, on this exhibiton. In this case, however, legacy notwithstanding, the fourth generation makes its own contribution to the field.

Kunsli's approach to jewelry takes into account its "intrinsic relationship with the body, but only on the condition that this precept is the springboard from which to challenge and reconstruct that premise".[3] He encourages viewers to rid themselves of their prejudices[4] and preconceptions about jewelry, beauty, preciousness, and technique. This kind of thinking that challenges our conceptual comfort zones and collective assumptions, orients the "4th Generation", and brings freshness and pedagogical impact to the exhibition.

What curator Klaus Bürgel calls "deceptively facile work" characterizes much of the jewelry in the show. This comes as a surprise from a country whose reputation for precision and technical mastery is unsurpassed. Could this *technical rebellion* be a reaction to the stringent training these jewelers received? Or is it the need to question *all* of the rules? Bürgel suggests that in the fine art arena, superior craftsmanship is first necessary in order to create in this offhanded and unpretentious manner.[5]

Using delicacy, Bettina Dittlmann imbues the historically non-precious with preciousness, and glorifies the non-aestheticized side of life. She captures the natural world in various stages of decay, making enameled copper and iron seem as fragile as drying plant life. Her brooch, *Memento Mori*, is a reminder that behind all of life's finest moments, death and decomposition lay in wait. Dittlmann uses demanding goldsmithing techniques in the treatment of base metals, and bejewels her work with vibrant colors. Her graphically impressive wire and enamel sketches are ornaments and objects. Those void of findings for attachment or function, stretch our concept of what jewelry is – not by telling us, but by compelling us to ask ourselves.

Karl Fritsch continues the challenge to our preconceptions by treating preciousness in a flippant and consciously irreverent way. He mocks the traditions of the *meister goldschmied* and all conventional perceptions of jewelry and beauty. His cavalier use of gold and gemstones demonstrates his disregard for their cultural and historical values. Fritsch's "not-design"[6] technique produced what seems like a hundred spontaneous Play-Doh-like castings; globular and crude wads of metal made into brooches, rings, and pendants. Some are made from melting other jewelry, leaving their gemstones to sink into the molten metal, and sporadically resurface. Others are simple wax castings with commercial findings thrown in, signaling their reference to function. Each piece reveals his process. Other jewelers file or sand away the marks of their tools; Fritsch purposefully leaves his fingerprints in the wax. His freedom and

Karen Pontoppidian
Ring, 1995
silver, enamel

ease with materials and techniques accentuate the unpretentious side of the personality of gold, coercing his viewers to reconsider their opinion of the precious metal. His pieces are not well designed and not *pretty.* They do not seem to make any historical reference. The work threatens even liberal ideas about jewelry and functional art, and is impressive because of this provocation. In the face of his highly rigorous training in a medium laden with pretension, Fritsch's unbound energy and utter lack of tradition is at once alarming, enlightening, and inspiring.

Karen Pontoppidian's work exalts the clumsier side of nature and jewelry. Her subjects are bulbous plant-like enameled forms affixed to heavy round ring shanks. Disregarding demeanor in her technical process as well, she "piles enamel powder into heaps"[7] on top of her constructions. Seeing these swollen nodules crusted with color, like crowns on rings where the diamonds usually are, suggests that we reconsider our western obsession with idealized physical perfection. Pontoppidian challenges us to see the prejudice in this value structure and to recognize beauty in all phases of life.

Adhering to a more formalist approach, Norman Weber's work is beautiful from a modernist perspective. He reconstructs jewelry in a sculpturally cohesive and intelligent way, taking into account form, material, process, and an historical relevance to his medium. His faceted constructions are cut and folded from thin gold sheets, like paper. They make reference to precious stones, traditional, and even commercial jewelry, but with far more visual integrity. Large, out of balance, and distorted, his completed objects come alive in a way that their solid and geometric counterparts never could. The distortion reveals their hollowness (a comment perhaps, about the *real thing*), and instigates a visual dynamic between interior and exterior, as well as between jewelry and fine art.

Bettina Speckner is the most conventional jeweler in the exhibition. She makes traditional, ornate, and exquisitely crafted settings for mounting her photoetched plates. Grey and black images of faces, animals, and landscapes are accented with gemstones and decorative backings. Still, the work sets itself apart from convention. The mood in her imagery is morose and the irregular forms are intriguing. Reminiscent of Victorian mourning jewelry, a mysterious and grim quality shrouds her work.

Anushka Corazon-Walch's brooches stylistically follow another student of Jünger's, Manfred Bischoff (her first apprenticeship was in his studio). Like Bischoff's, her work is graphic, representational, and makes use of materials in a similar way. However, Corazon-Walch's work is more lighthearted and less metaphysical than Bischoff's; including brooches in such forms as a crudely drawn foot and a bikini bathing suit. Her rings with their wide bands and miniature gold vessels strewn haphazardly on the surface add a third dimension and more of her own personal identity to the style.

This exhibition does not respond to our highest conception of aesthetic value. It is not an archetypal manifestation of all we imagine *jewelry* to be. But, as Bürgel says, that would be boring because we would already know what we would see.[8] Most of this work asks more questions about these ideals than it furnishes answers. Yet, these are the questions that underline the show's potential as a catalytic influence to the field, and can serve as a prod to a jewelry community that rarely sees such provocative work. Bürgel and the Rhode Island School of Design are to be commended for bringing this collection to the students and to the public. "4th Generation" gives us all a chance to reassess our preconceptions, expectations, and assumptions about craftsmanship, preciousness, beauty, and jewelry .

Alyssa Dee Krauss is a jeweler living in Lafayette, New Jersey

[1] Klaus Bürgel, interview with author, September 1995.
[2] Exhibition, March – May 1993, at the Neue Sammlung in Munich, Drei Generationen Gold und Silberschmiede – Franz Rickert, Erhard Hössle, Herman Jünger, Ulla Mayer, and Otto Kunsli.
[3] Laurie A. Stein, Alchemy as Influence: The Resonance of Munich Goldsmiths in America, from; Exhibition Catalogue, Münchner Goldschmiede, Münchner Stadt Museum, Munich, 1993, p.71.
[4] Otto Kunsli, Fritsch Figurations – Unexpected and Unashamed, essay for Karl Fritsch's exhibition at Gallery Ra, Amsterdam 1995.
[5] Klaus Bürgel, interview.
[6] Karl Fritsch, artist statement, 1995
[7] Klaus Bürgel, curator's essay, 1995
[8] Bürgel, interview.

VALUE: Kathy Buszkiewicz

Wearley Studio Gallery
Royal Oak, MI
October 14 – December 22, 1995

By Thomas Madden

By what measure do we individually or collectively ascribe value to an object? What influences come into play within this hierarchy? And what, if any, are the consequences of our attitudes toward value and commodity? These questions are at the heart of Kathy Buszkiewicz's solo exhibition

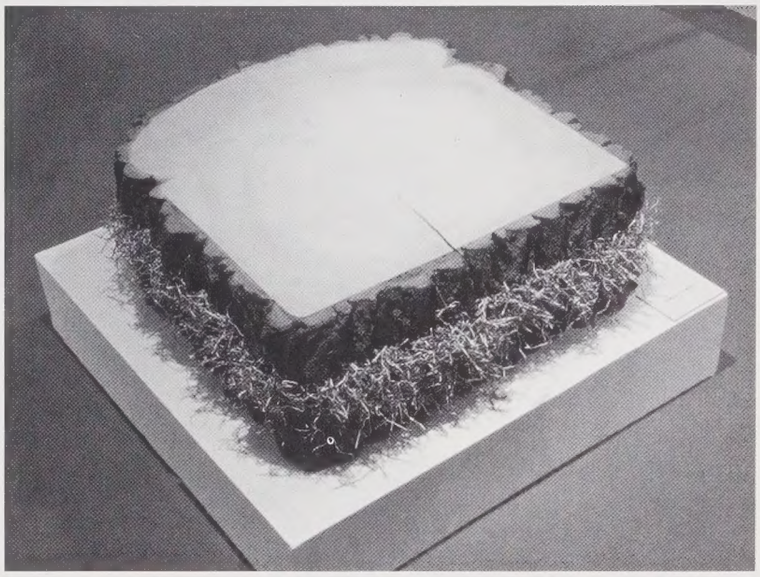
The twenty one objects which comprise this exhibition reflect the diverse spectrum of jewelry and sculpture which attract Ms. Buszkiewicz's attention. The objects range in scale from environmental installations to the more intimate format of sculpture, vessels, and jewelry. Although the scale of individual pieces differs greatly across the exhibition, the spirit and motivation that breathes life into the work is consistent throughout the show.

The issues that Buszkiewicz examines echo many of the challenges facing contemporary culture: waste, conservation of precious resources, and misplaced priorities. As such, her themes are often unsettling. They cross social boundaries and in many instances are matters of global concern.

Within her works, Buszkiewicz establishes a metaphorical language using objects as commonplace as the sandwich, diamond engagement rings, rolls of coins, shells, and topiaries. Removed from their usual context of size and material and juxtaposed with wood, and shredded USA currency, these commonplace artifacts establish a dialog of accessible forms through which issues of social relevance can be addressed. Her choice of materials, scale, and recognizable forms provokes thought, asks questions, and ultimately implores participation from the viewer. Buszkiewicz questions long held expectations and attitudes toward the preciousness of material, permanence, and the role of jewelry as embellishment and personal expression.

One particularly notable piece, *Commodity on White*, confronts the viewer through its benign reference to the sandwich. In this work, 3 x 3' slabs of sectioned tree trunk suggest slices of bread thickly spread with a filling of shredded USA currency. Through this playful sense of recognition Buszkiewicz invites a deeper consideration of the environmental and economic issues which permeate this work. In such pieces, the artist reveals herself to be a master of the soft sell. Through humor, grace, and a little absurdity she entices, cajoles, and ultimately moves the viewer to more clearly recognize the arrogant waste which has become so much a part of western culture.

Inversely, Buszkiewicz's work is a celebration of surface and texture. Her attention to detail, the richness of wood, shredded currency, bark, and shell contrast with gold, silver, and steel to validate and affirm their status as metaphor. Within her brooch *ONE* Buszkiewicz enshrines the most common place of natural forms, using a delicately fabricated and hammered gold frame. Possibly through chance, though clearly the result of close observation and sensitivity, Buszkiewicz has selected as the central element of this composition a fragment of dark yet richly textured pine cone. This shard with its broken edges and tiny gestures of growth speaks of the life, death, and renewal that are the natural cycle of our world. In a final punctuation the artist presents us with the word "ONE". Clipped from a one dollar bill this bold exclamation is framed in a simple oval border, an icon of global economic power hanging tenuously beneath the fragile and ethereal structure of life.



Somewhat more ambiguously *Tender Revival* weds the strong geometry of the African Ibo tribes' historic symbol of status and social hierarchy with that of the west. These two anklets of broadly beveled discs, are fashioned of wood and covered with sorted and selectively affixed strips of U.S. currency. The bands created by the subtle contrasts in the green and gray printed surface of the bills contribute to an overall sense of stately elegance and posture. On one anklet the words "For All Debts Public And Private" reveal themselves in the delicate collage of the surface. On the other "This Note Is Legal Tender" materializes.

This exhibition is an experience rich with contrasts. One is at first drawn to the intimacy of the sculpture and jewelry, overlooking the larger, seemingly unobtrusive dialog of her installations. Yet their secrets invite and reveal themselves in works such as *Topiaries #1, #2, #3,* and *Established Sentiment,* an environment comprised of a white washed cast iron Victorian bench and an ornamental willow tree whose leaves reveal the patterns of shredded currency.

Topiaries #1, #2, and *#3,* are at first glance quite common place. Exactly the type of foliage one might expect in a swank gallery or suburban mall. Slowly, however, the recognition dawns that these three absurd, opulent denizens of modern culture are constructed of shredded U.S. currency, rolled, wadded, or smoothly affixed to bold geometric structures. Complete with stems, mulch, and planters, these topiaries suggest a trio of animated and humorous aliens. There is an unmistakable, yet absurd charm within these three structures, an ease of familiarity. The *Topiaries* speak quite eloquently of misplaced priorities, misleading artifice, and arrogant waste, themes echoed throughout the show.

Buszkiewicz doesn't belt you with a brick, or make her point by yelling obscenities, clearly this is not her way. Instead she speaks softly. With low steady tones she entices you to lean in and look close. Within the intimacy of this dialog she reveals her parables of contemporary society. With her choices of material and metaphor Buszkiewicz has composed a collection of work which is accessible, compelling, and relevant.

Thomas Madden is a metalsmith who lives in Bowling Green, OH.

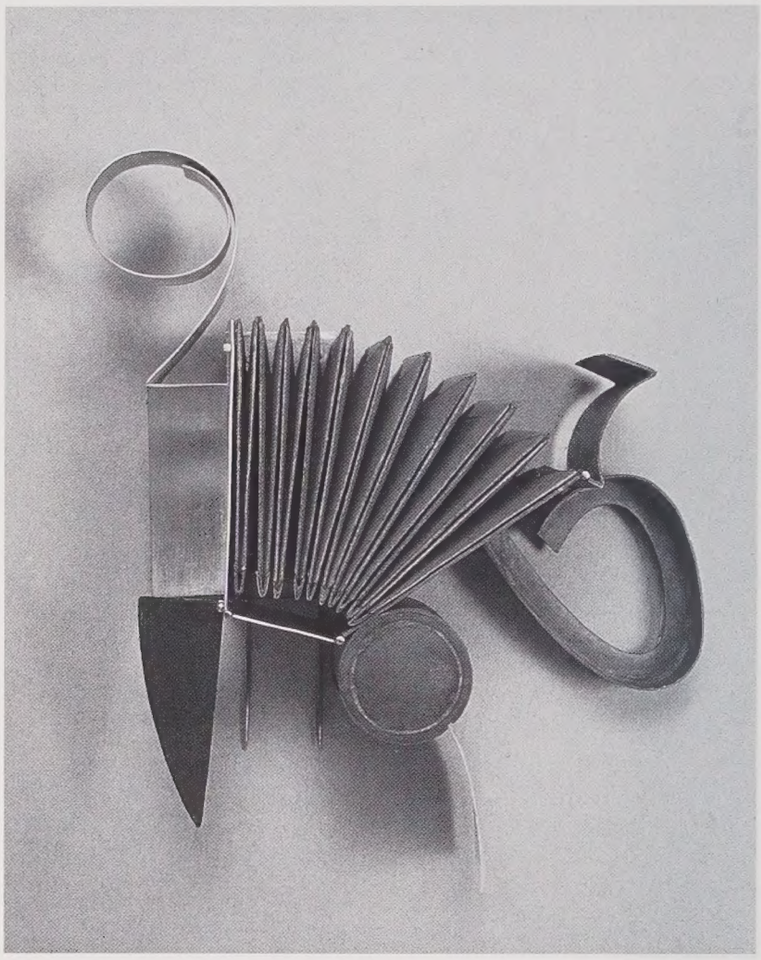
ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT

One, (brooch), 1994
18k, pine cone, US. currency
3 x 7/8 x 1/2"

3 Topiary, 1994
wood, steel, plastic, concrete, US. currency
65 x 48 x 48"

Commodity on White, 1994
wood, bark, US. currency
9 1/2 x 24 x 25"

Second Annual
Jewelry/Metals Symposium
Seattle, Washington
Continued from page 14



RIGHT
Nel Linssen
Necklace, 1995
twisted paper

It was interesting to discover that in the pre-industrial age, all knives were a result of collaboration, frequently between several workshops each having more than one person. Contemporary work is usually done by one person, or maybe a combination of a few people all running one person shops. When it is a collaboration, the handle maker retains full credit for the piece, since they are the ones who usually set the aesthetic tone.

The advent of large scale production changed everything about knifemaking except design. Designers appropriated every conceivable style throughout history and simply adapted it to the industry. By the end of the 19th century, this fiction of making handmade looking things by machine was re-thought and re-worked. The field of industrial design began to flourish, and incorporated modern machine processes into the design aesthetic. Today, Baldwin says, this has become the dominant cultural design force.

Welcomed as an "Institute of Seattle", Ramona Solberg next presented her lecture, "Gold Through the Ages, in All Parts of the World". This is a subject large enough for a symposium of its own, and Solberg resorted to giving an equivocal presentation of gold facts and trivia.

Roughly following a chronological time line, we saw images of gold as it is found in its original state, purification methods, and what man in various parts of the world-has made with it.

The most interesting tidbits of Solberg's lecture were found in her personal experiences with gold in her travels. These ranged from museum pieces that she was fortunate to see in many different countries to gold leaf manufacturing and applications she witnessed in Burma.

The gem of the afternoon lectures was an insightful look into jewelry restoration by Kevin Glenn Crane. Crane has been a jewelry designer and maker for fourteen years and is a specialist in the field of antique jewelry restoration.

He explained the different areas that make up the field, and how each area differs in its attitudes. At one end of the spectrum one finds historical restoration. This interpretive process entails a working knowledge of the period of the piece and the tools involved in its creation, enabling the piece to be fully revitalized by skilled hands. At the other end of the spectrum one finds the ubiquitous jewelry repair shop, whose goal is a straightforward, somewhat undisguised, remedy. Crane also touched on preservation and conservation and how they often work in tandem with the other techniques.

It is a field largely unexplored by contemporary jewelers. We seem consciously unaware of how our jewelry is a manifestation of the spirit of our times, and what may be involved in its own restoration hundreds of years from now. For this jeweler it was an eye-opening look into a field that calls for my respect and broadens my perspective.

FAR RIGHT
Lucy Sarneel
Brooch, 1994
gold, silver,
zinc, iron, paper

The day long symposium concluded with a relaxing slide show, presented by Micki Lippe, of work by contemporary metalsmiths. The idea was to showcase people who are hopefully making a living in the metalsmithing field without a full time teaching job. Entitled, "Voices From the Studio", it included almost eighty artists selected from solicitations sent nationwide. Of these, Lippe selected four with whom she conducted short interviews. These artists, Judith Kaufman, Abrasha, Marcia Bruno, and Julie Mihalisin, gave candid answers to questions of how they got started and how they currently market their work.

Accompanying the Jewelry/Metals Symposium were six shows at Seattle galleries. Popular jewelry artist Ken Bova had work at MIA Gallery, and "Advanced Students Metal Show" could be seen at Pratt Fine Arts Center. Most noteworthy were the shows at Artworks Gallery, Facèré Jewelry Art Gallery, Goldman's Jewelry, and the Seattle Metals Guild biannual member exhibition at the Washington State Convention Center.

"Aspects of the Series", at Artworks Gallery, was a compelling look at Dutch serial jewelry, its birth and its present day philosophies. The show was a comprehensive exhibition of student works which were designed for serial production. Closer to the heart was "Old Friends – New Forms" at Goldman's Jewelry, featuring four artists. Megan Corwin's beautiful new work is in the form of small, handsome bottles with stoppers of sterling, 18k, and 14k gold. Tami Dean's collection of jewelry included rings, amulets, brooches, and earrings, all boldly designed with intricate piercings. Lynne Hull had an appealing series of mirrors designed with patinaed copper tubing framing and Cathryn Vandenbrink had a stunning collection of her copper and silver *pod* form necklaces.

Facèré Jewelry Art Gallery took a novel approach in its exhibition theme of "Men at Work". The three artists have very different approaches to the field, and the juxtaposition of their work was quite exciting. Lee Phillips works in an intricate manner of balancing small three dimensional units in playful ways. He states: "I am ...seeking beauty in the random, appreciating the deeper meaning/mystery of geometry." More thoughts on the subject of geometry and order resulted in a completely different aesthetic in the jewelry of Zack Peabody. His highly engineered pieces "...symbolize wholly ordered systems which have no basis in nature". In almost direct opposition to this approach, Andy Cooperman's beautifully complex and layered work speaks wholly of nature, natural forces, and specifically of a marine environment.

This event, which relied heavily on the superb talent and vitality of Northwest artists, tied together divergent agendas within the greater context of the metalsmithing field. With all that was presented to participants in this symposium, it is no wonder that one attendant said that she felt that she had had an entire semester of school in one day.

Sharon Boardway is a jewelry artist living in Seattle, WA.

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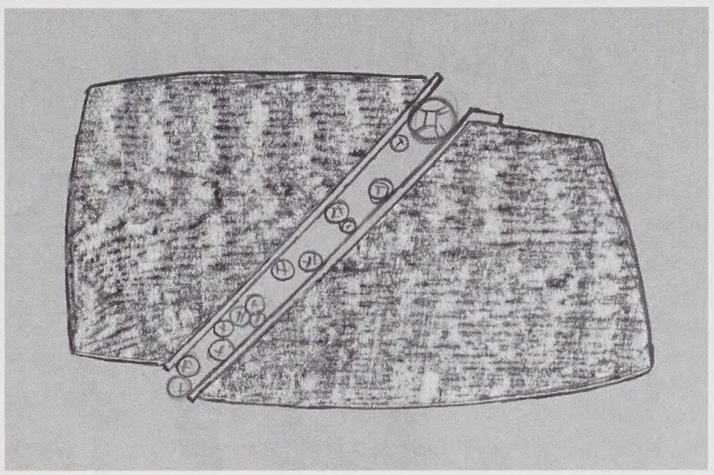

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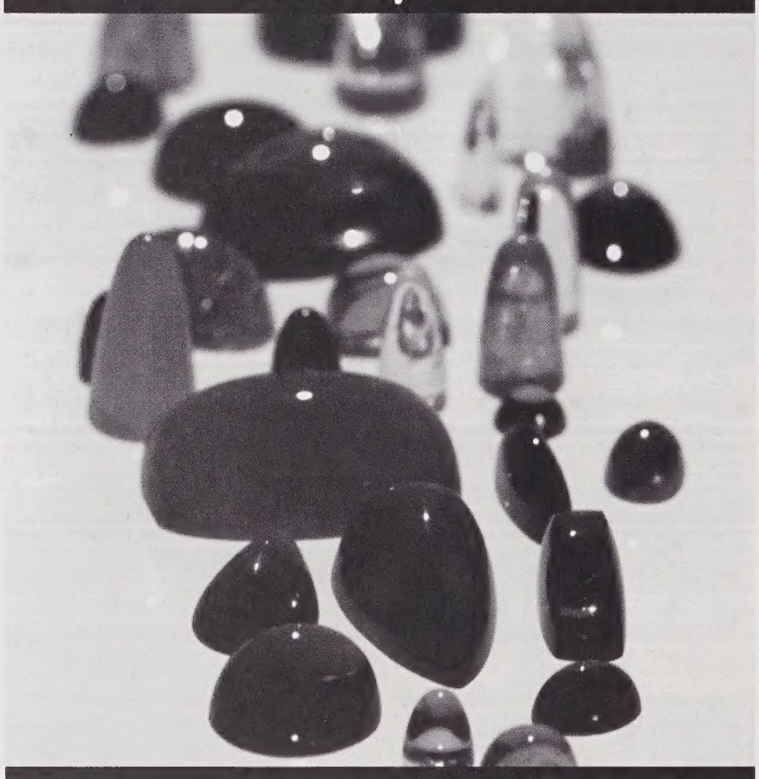

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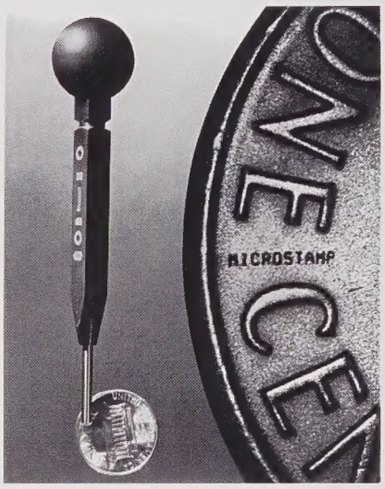

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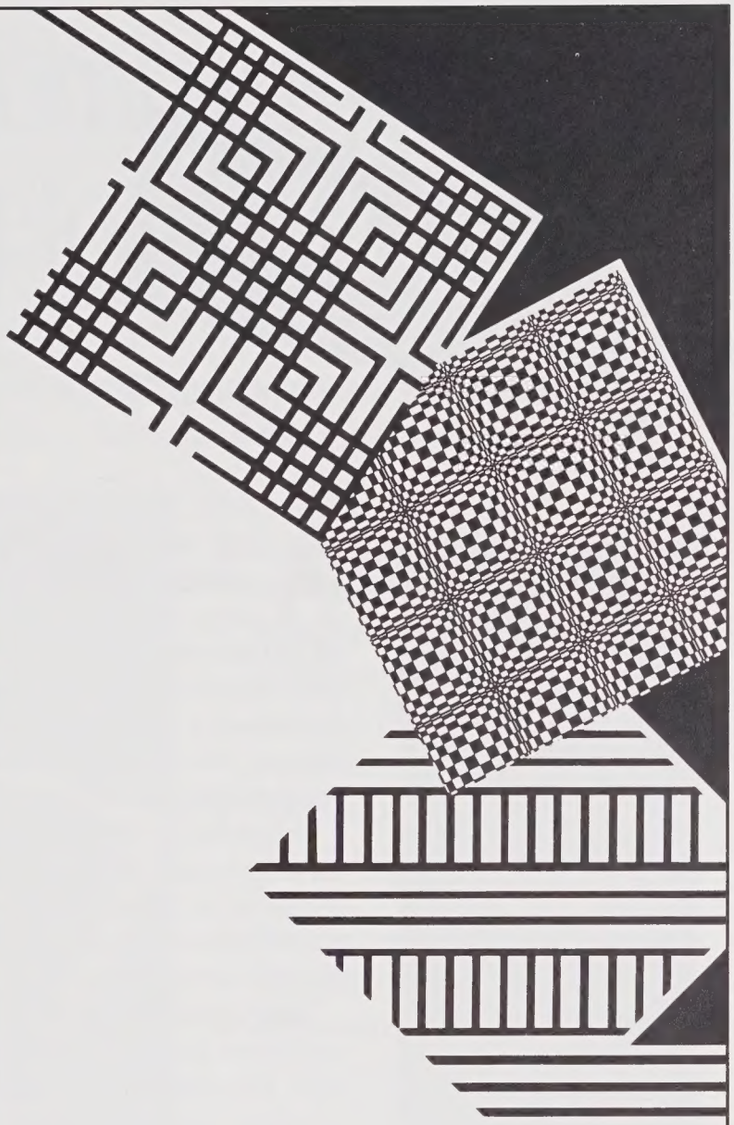

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RESERVATIONS: *July 19th, 1996*
ARTWORK: *August 9th, 1996*
PUBLICATION DATE: *February 1997*

PUBLISHERS OF:

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REGISTRATION FEES - SNAG members $190, student members $140, non-members $220, student non-member $165 if you register by April 1, 1996. From April 1 until May15, 1996 there is a late fee of $25. From May 15th until the conference begins the late fee is $50.

RESERVATIONS AND ROOM RATES The following rates (taxes not included) will be available from June 9 through June 18, 1996. Single - $109, Double - $109, Triple - $129, Quadruple - $149, Suites will be discounted by 30%. Student rates begin at $95 for a single and $10 for each additional person in a room. For reservations, call 202-328-2900. Reservations must be made before May 19, 1996, and secured with a deposit or credit card. **Conference will be limited to 500 attendees. You need to make your reservations as soon as possible in order to be assured of a room.**

ROOM SHARING - If you need a roommate, contact Karen Schiager, 301-948-1913, and specify number of roommates, non-smoking, etc.

MEAL PLAN - an optional meal plan for $95, including taxes and service charges, is available. This will consist of three breakfasts and two lunches.

AIR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS - The TICKET COUNTER, 6900 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 706, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, is our official travel agent. For information on discount airfare on United Airlines or the appropriate carrier for your city, call THE TICKET COUNTER at 800-247-7651 or Fax : 301-913-0166. All tickets are subject to the rules and regulations of the airlines.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM - Washington at its best in three days jam-packed full of talks, panels, and demonstrations. Invited speakers include: Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Michael Monroe, Roseanne Raab, Oppi Untracht, Betty Cook, Robert Coogan, Steven Fisher, Komelia Okim, Ellen Reiben, Alan Revere, Brian Meek, representatives from the Trademark, Copyright, Small Business and other agencies, and a panel of Washington lawyers. There will be two demonstrations and small group gatherings for students, educators, gallery owner/directors and guild members to get acquainted, compare notes, and discuss mutual concerns.

SPECIAL EVENTS - The conference will begin with a traditional pin swap at the Sheraton. There will be a buffet dinner, and the highlight of the evening will be a special musical review performance by Washington's own, hilarious political satire group, The Capitol Steps. On Saturday, enjoy dinner and dancing at the banquet when the results of the silent auction will be announced. The suppliers will again host a party for all conferees.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS - In DC at the Zenith Gallery, Jewelerswerk; and The Renwick Gallery. In Alexandria VA at the Torpedo Factory and in Rockville MD at Montgomery College, and Zaruba Gallery. Jewelry and metal objects of all kinds may also be seen in all the Smithsonian museums, Dumbarton Oaks, Hillwood House, The Women's Museum, etc.

SUPPLIERS ROOM - Twenty-four suppliers of gemstones, tools, equipment and the SNAG Book Department.

SILENT AUCTION - Original jewelry, tools, etc., donated by artists and suppliers will help raise money for SNAG. Contact Diane de Beixedon, 130 LaValette Avenue, Norfolk VA 23504.

STUDENT SLIDE COMPETITION - Open to all students currently enrolled in a college or university taking metals courses. The deadline for submissions is April 1,1996. For information about having your work included in the conference slide show, send to: Professor Jennifer Stenhouse, Metals and Jewelry Department, Savannah College of Art and Design, P.O. Box 3146, Savannah GA 31402-3146. Or call 912-897-7797.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

All subscribers to METALSMITH will receive a conference registration brochure early in 1996. Others may request the brochure by calling Karen Schiager, 301-948-1913. If you have any other questions about the conference, call Eun-Mee Chung, conference chairperson, 301-948-3053.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS - Shana Kroiz has organized a four-day workshop program, June 8 through June 11, 1995, at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Presentations will include "Making a Spectacle: The Eyeware Making Workshop" with Deb Stoner and Brian Adams, "Hands Off: Digital Advances in Jewelry Making" with Stanley Lechtzin, and "Creating by Metal Forming" with Betty Helen Longhi. For registration and information contact: Office of Continuing Education, Maryland Institute College of Art, 1300 Mount Royal Avenue, Baltimore MD 21217. Telephone 410-225-2219 or Fax 410-225-2229.

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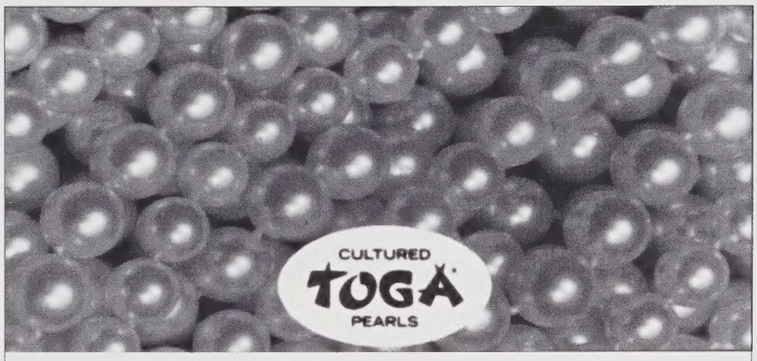

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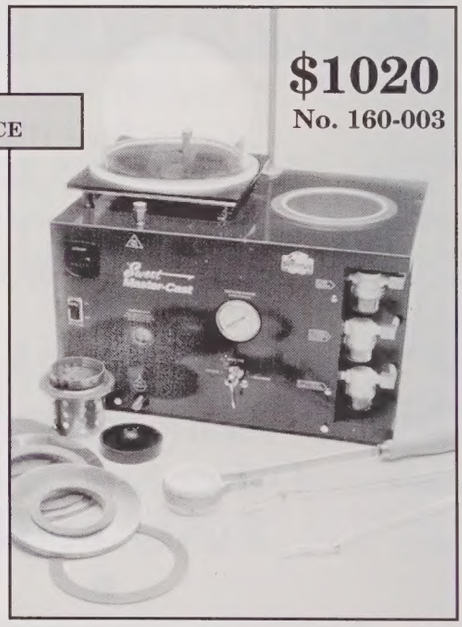

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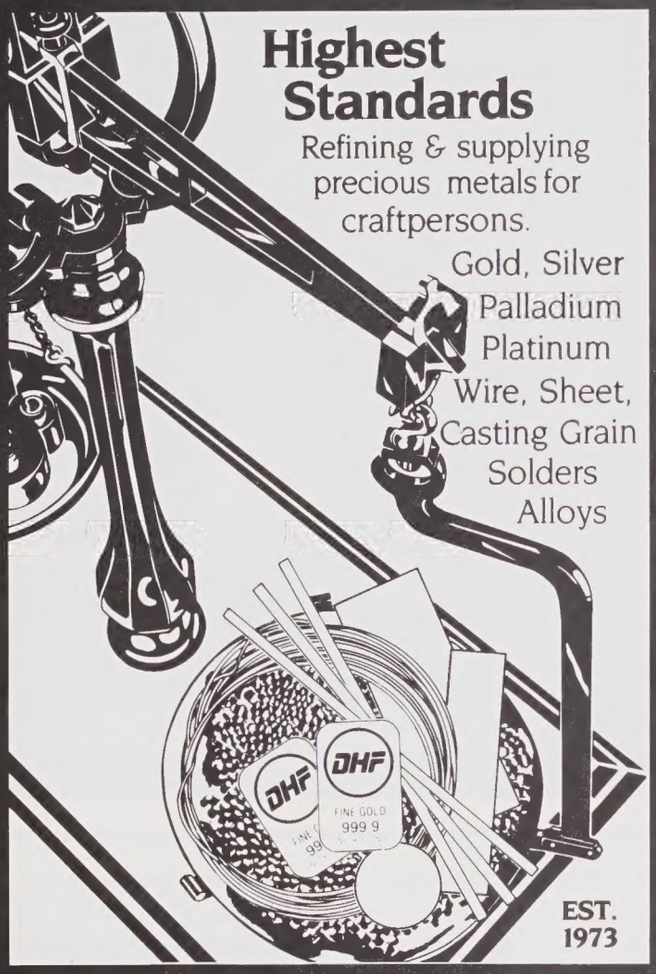

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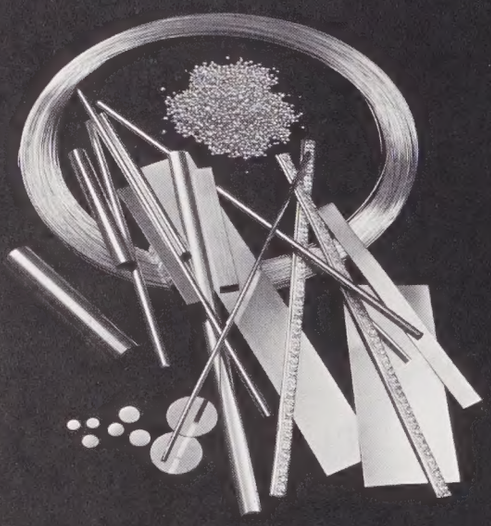

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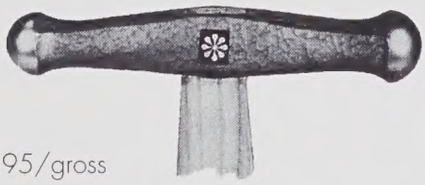

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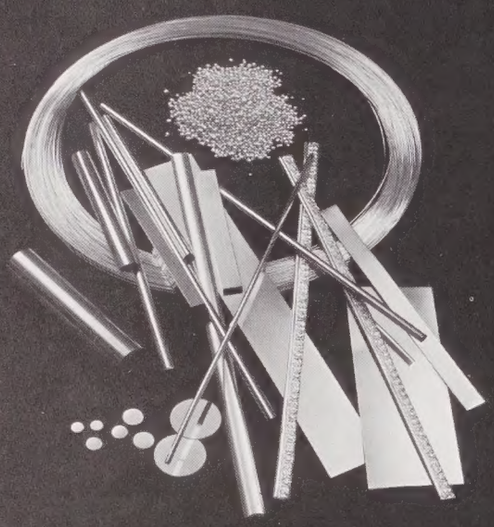

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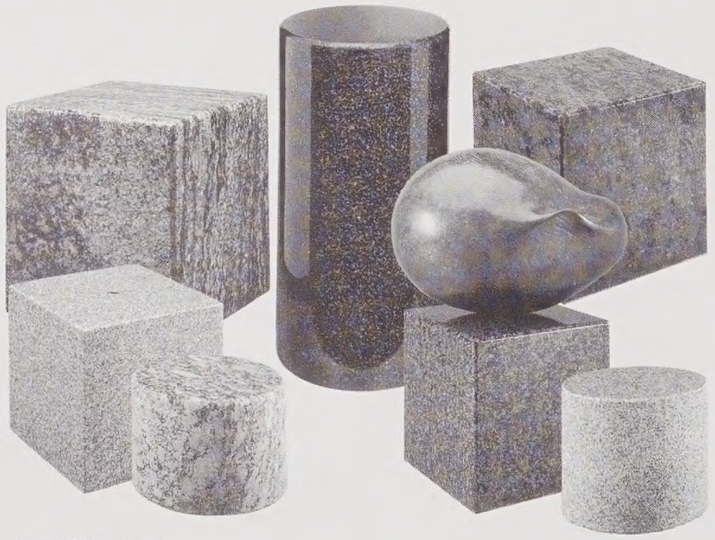

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1) a 500 to 1000 word, double-spaced, thematically-based project proposal with an indication of some of the artists or works to be featured;

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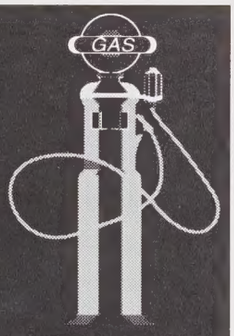

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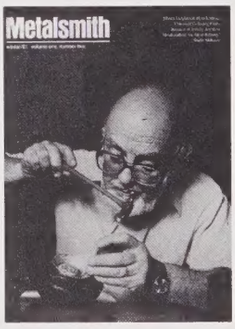

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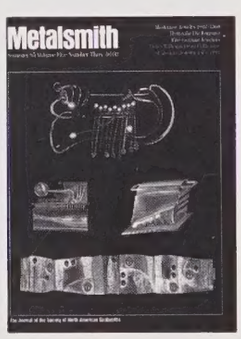

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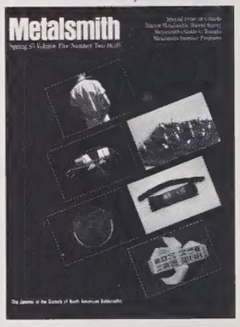

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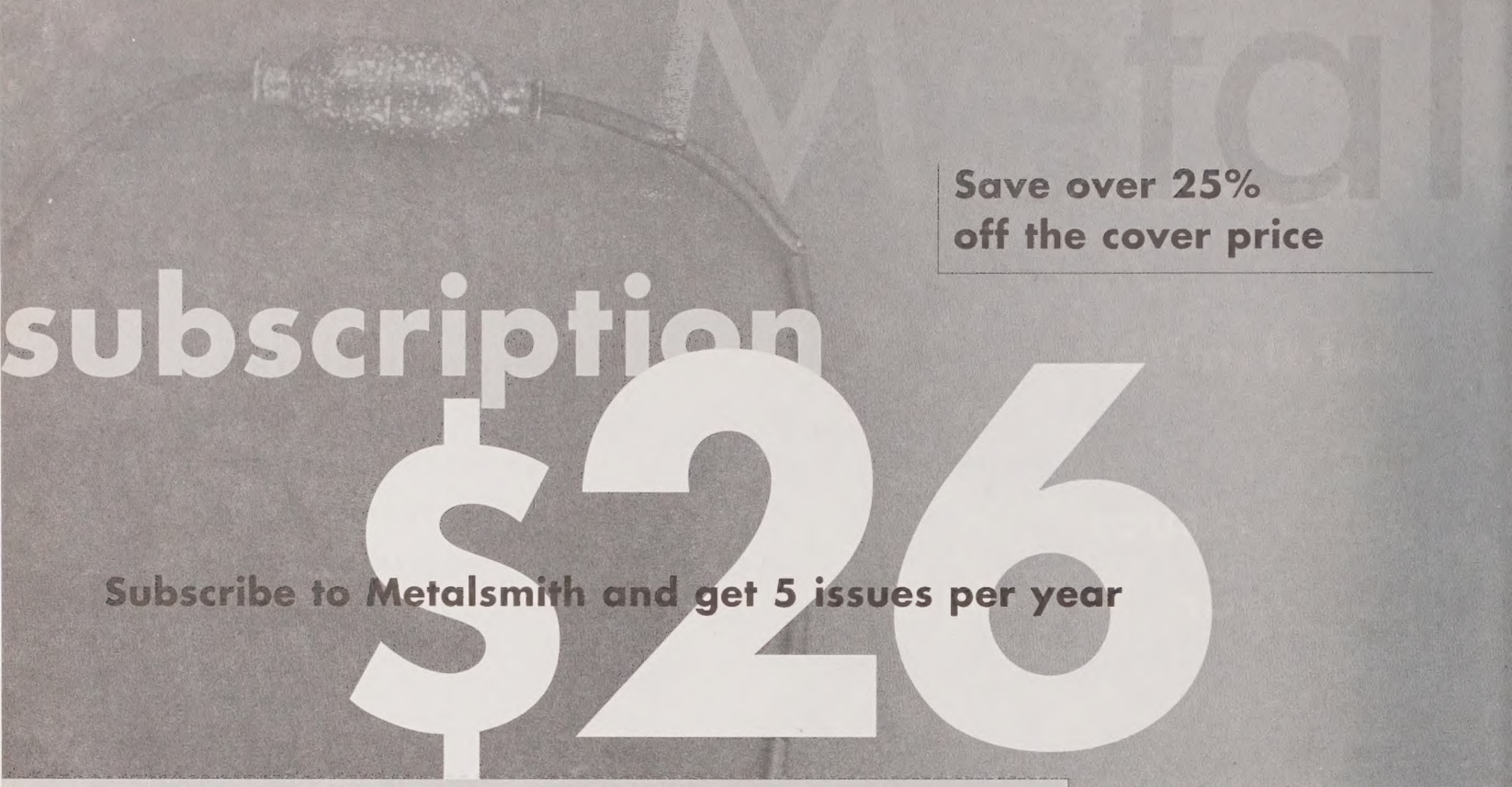

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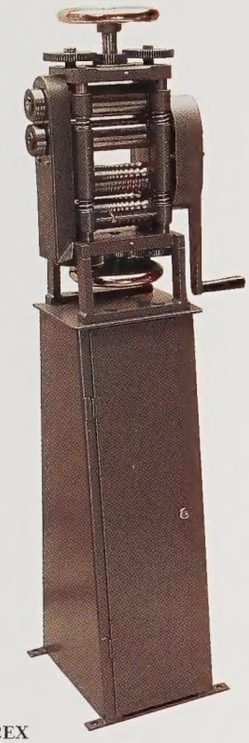

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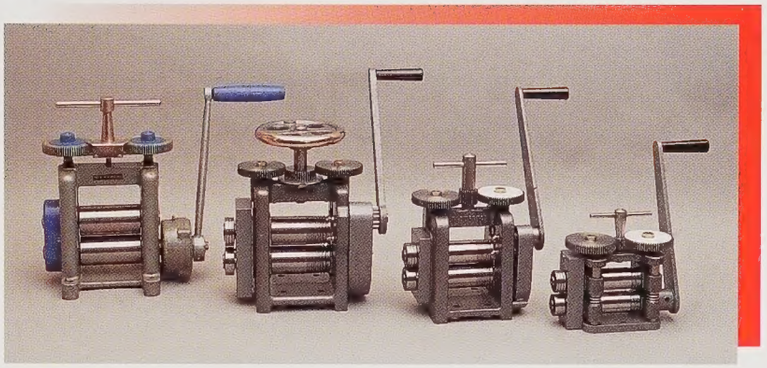

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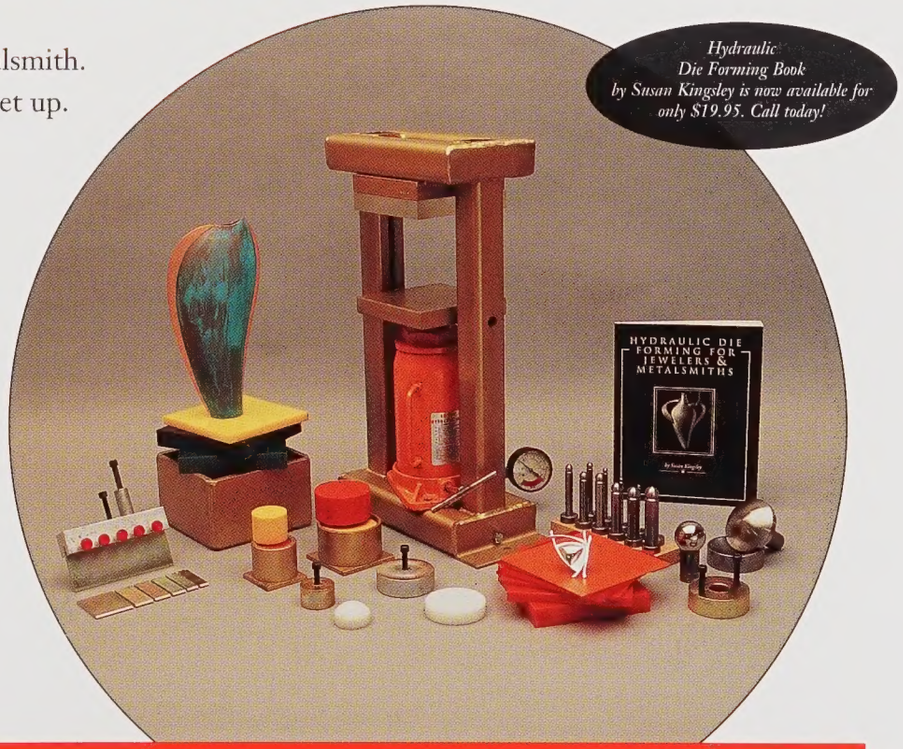
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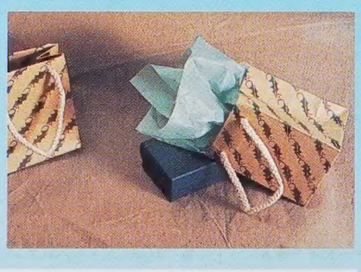

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